THE BEST FIGHT IS THE ONE YOU'RE NOT IN

CONCEALEDCARRY MAGAZINE

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE FOR RESPONSIBLY ARMED AMERICANS

MAY/JUNE 2025
VOLUME 22 ISSUE 4
$9.99

USCCA

Celebrating 75 Years of Rugged, Reliable Firearms®

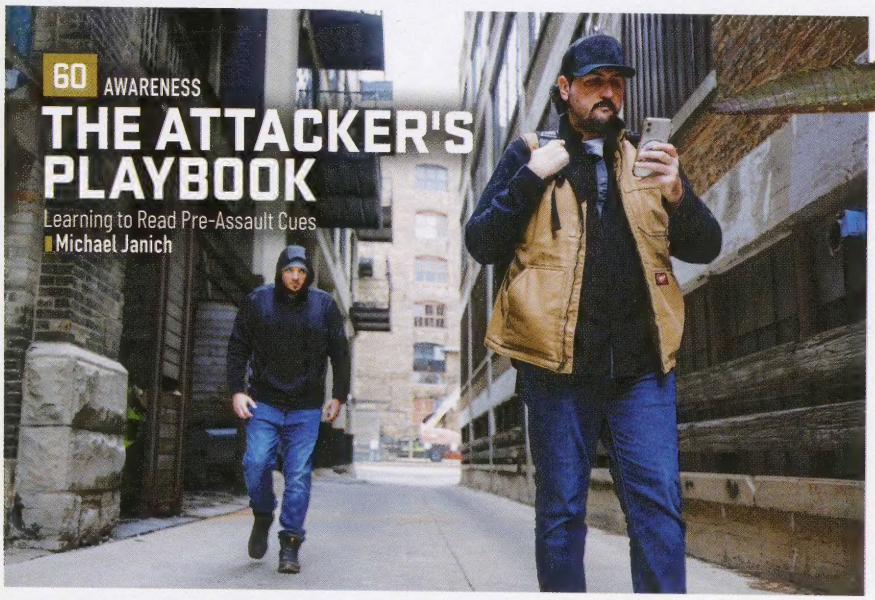
In 2024, Ruger proudly celebrates 75 years of manufacturing rugged, reliable firearms. To commemorate this occasion, Ruger is proud to announce four 75th Anniversary Models, a Mark IV™ pistol, two different 10/22® rifles and an LCP® MAX, each representative of Ruger's storied past and bright future. These commemorative models are inspired by iconic Ruger products, and represent each of our three major manufacturing facilities.

LEARN MORE

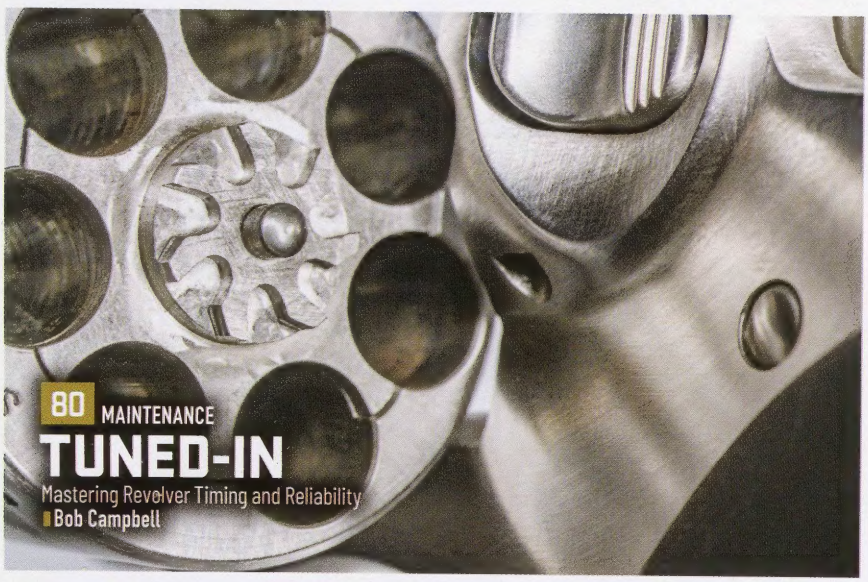
The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.

RUGER 75 1949-2024

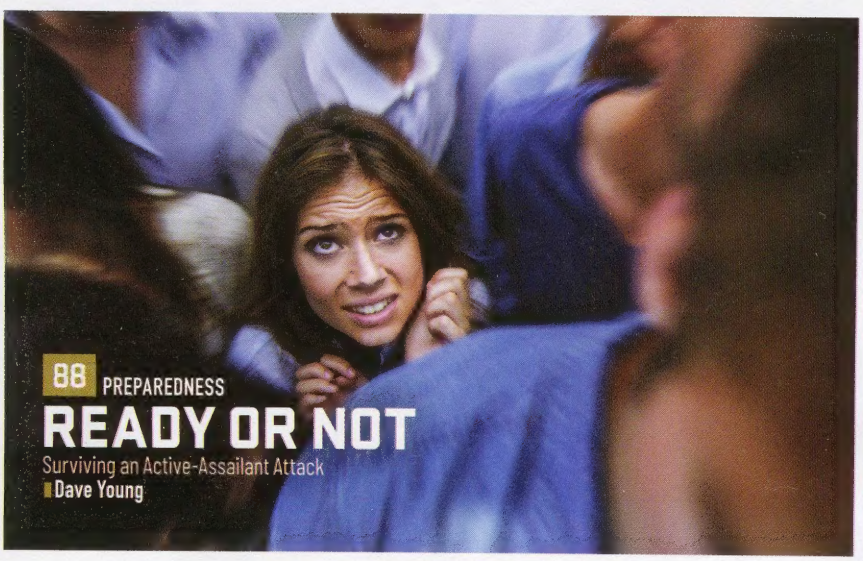
CONTENTS | May/June 2025



60 AWARENESS
THE ATTACKER'S PLAYBOOK
Learning to Read Pre-Assault Cues
Michael Janich



80 MAINTENANCE
TUNED-IN
Mastering Revolver Timing and Reliability
Bob Campbell



88 PREPAREDNESS
READY OR NOT
Surviving an Active-Assailant Attack
Dave Young

FEATURES

48
FANGS & FEAR
MOOSE, FERAL HOGS, SNAKES AND GATORS
Self-Defense Against Animals, Part 4
Dorsey Kindler

56
ALERTNESS
THINK IN COLOR
Living by Cooper's Color Code
Dick Fairburn

66
PROTECTING OTHERS
INTENTIONAL INTERVENTION
Deciding in Advance Who You'll Defend
Joel T. Nadler

70
CHILDREN
YOUNG DEFENDERS
Self-Defense Lessons for Kids
Kristen Jackson

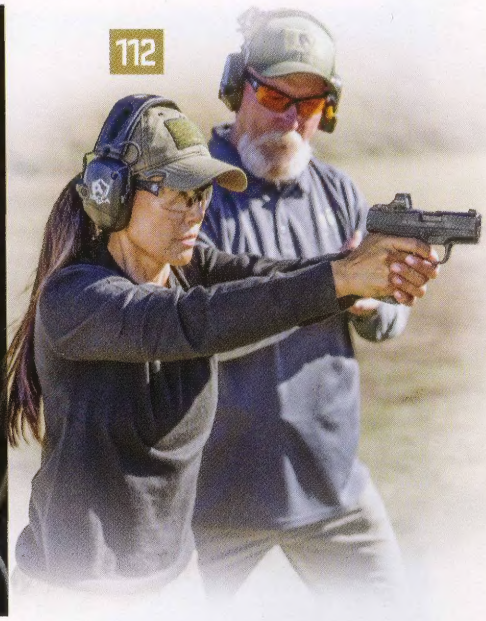
74
HOME DEFENSE
YOUR DMZ
Tactical Wisdom for Protecting Your Home
George Hupp

84
THREAT RESPONSE
CONDITION ORANGE
Developing a Defensive Mindset
Brad Lewis

96
HANDGUNNING
RISEN AGAIN
Military Armament Corporation Inglis L9A1
Nick Jacobellis

100
AESTHETICS
THE 'GRAY MAN' PARADOX
Blending in While Projecting Confidence
Joel T. Nadler

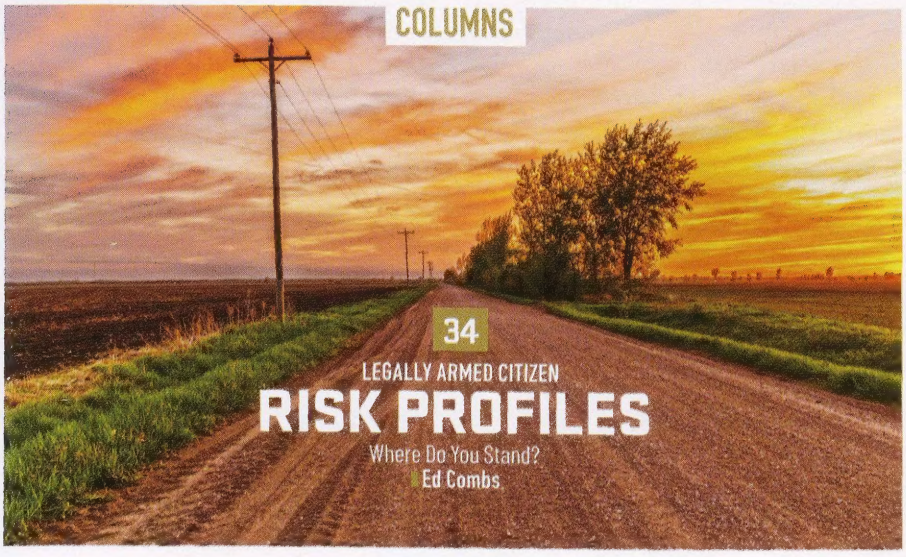
92 THIRD PARTY
HELP OR HOLD BACK?
The Risks and Realities of Defending a Stranger
Ed Marshman



112

104 TACTICS
THREAT ASSESSMENT
Sharpening Your Situational Awareness
Michael Janich

108 AVOIDANCE
THE POWER OF WALKING AWAY
When De-escalation Is Your Best Defense
Kristen Jackson



COLUMNS

34 LEGALLY ARMED CITIZEN
RISK PROFILES
Where Do You Stand?
Ed Combs

38 IT'S JUST THE LAW
ESTATE PLANNING & FIREARMS
Final Preparations K.L. Jamison

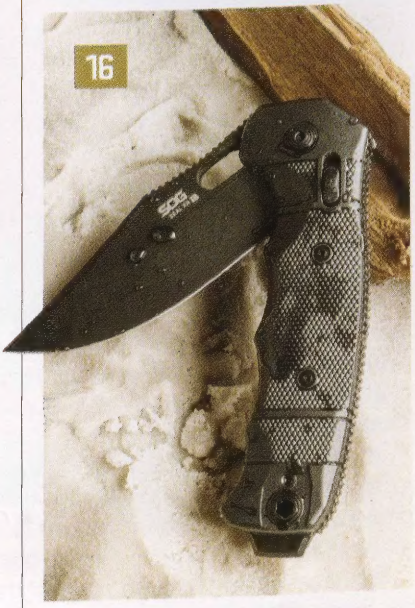
42 BALLISTIC BASICS
SUFFICIENTLY PACKING
How Much Gun Do You Really Need?
Tamara Keel

44 EXPERT WITNESS
THE SIREN'S SONG
Florida Home Intruders Answer the Wrong Call
Anthony L. DeWitt

46 CITY LIMITS
METRO DEFENSE
Avoid, Evade and Prepare for Violence
Chip Eberhart

DEPARTMENTS

6 FOUNDER'S MESSAGE
8 EDITOR'S SHOT
10 ABOUT THE COVER
12 ASK THE USCCA
14 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
16 BATTLE BLADES
18 TRUE STORIES
22 BENCH REPORT
26 DRILL OF THE MONTH
28 LEGISLATIVE NEWS
32 GEAR WE LOVE
112 INSTRUCTOR'S CORNER
114 DEFENSIVE EDGE
116 MODERN LONG GUN
118 PRESS CHECK



16

THE WELL-WORN PATH

LET INTUITION & EXPERIENCE GUIDE YOU

If you've dived into the self-defense world even a little, you've likely heard someone mention a book called *The Gift of Fear*. In the book, author Gavin DeBecker explores — in depth — the concept of intuition.

You can think of intuition as that little voice inside your head that alerts you when something feels "off." Your intuition is constantly directing you to help you avoid danger and make good decisions. In other words, intuition is a guide of sorts that leads you toward what is right and what is safe. As DeBecker points out, with time — and with practice — you can fine-tune your intuition to help you identify real fear. And if you're able to identify real fear, you're far more likely to be able to successfully respond to an impending threat — or to avoid it altogether.

The problem is that you might end up ignoring that little voice in your head because you don't have the context to make any sense of it. (I've been guilty of this more than a time or two myself.) You might think that you're overreacting and don't want to look foolish or hurt other people's feelings. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes a real-world wake-up call — what you might think of as "experience" — to provide that context. But experience can be a double-edged sword. In the realm of personal safety, it might mean that you've come face to face with some of the more unpleasant parts of human nature. But it might also prove that your intuition was right all along — and that means you'll be more likely to trust it going forward.

If you're lucky, such experiences will be minor, helping to provide context for future encounters. But is there any way to stay safe — to learn to trust your intuition — without that hefty dose of real-world experience? I'm glad you asked.

As I was reading through some of the content in this issue, an image of Mt. Everest came to mind. On the world's tallest mountain, there exists a group of Sherpas whose job it is to establish fixed ropes and ladders along the most dangerous parts of various routes to make it easier (and safer) to get to the summit. It seems almost anyone who's in decent shape and who has the means to hire a guide can take a crack at reaching the top of the Earth. But what if those fixed lines weren't there? I'd imagine there'd be a lot less people attempting to summit and a lot more deaths among those who did.

In the real world, what if you had your very own Sherpa to help you navigate dangerous terrain? What if you could follow a well-worn and safer path to success instead of trying to figure it all out on your own?

We asked some of our top writers — from knife-fighting experts to longtime firearms trainers to moms who are working to keep their kids safe in a complex world — to share critical information on situational awareness and conflict avoidance. These are great tools, and you'll read all about both of them throughout this "Best Fight" issue. You'll also learn about the Cooper Color Code, de-escalation tactics and a whole lot more. Our goal here is to provide you with some context; a framework from which you can interpret your own intuition going forward so that you can stay safe and keep your loved ones safe too.

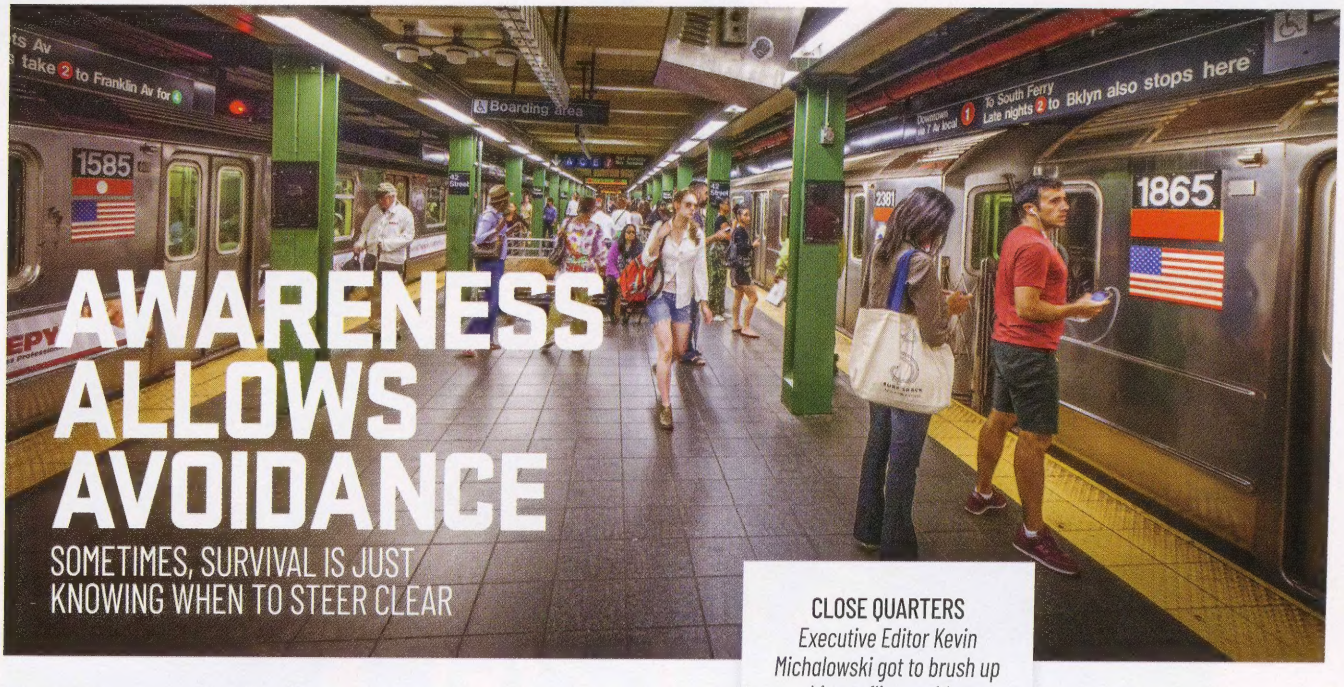
It takes effort to learn to listen to your gut. Start by learning all you can about situational awareness and conflict avoidance, and then take your own experiences — and those fixed lines of experience that others have laid for you — and do your best to avoid the fight. Remember: The best fight is the one you're not in. But if you find yourself in a fight you cannot avoid, the next best fight is the one you win. We can help.

NTRODUCING THE NEW COMPACT

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

ECHELON™ 4.0C

UNPARALLELED



AWARENESS ALLOWS AVOIDANCE

SOMETIMES, SURVIVAL IS JUST KNOWING WHEN TO STEER CLEAR

CLOSE QUARTERS
Executive Editor Kevin Michalowski got to brush up on his conflict-avoidance skills during a subway ride on a recent trip to New York City.

The shirtless man wandering in the middle of 125th Street and screaming at passing cars seemed like nothing to worry about.

It was around 11 p.m. and, for reasons too numerous and complicated to explain here, I had just completed my first solo subway ride in New York City. Let's just say that my son abandoned me to attend a party with his friends after we saw a wonderful production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. His instructions were simple: "Get on the A Train and get off at 125th Street. Your hotel is just a couple blocks east. You'll be fine."

So, there I was, alone, a Wisconsin rock farmer heading toward Harlem on the New York City subway for the first time in my life at 58 years old. All I had to do was get off at the correct stop, find my way to the surface and walk past the Apollo Theater to the Renaissance New York Harlem Hotel. Simple.

While I am a competent traveler, with plenty of experience in major metropolitan areas around the world, anyone who knows me understands that I am not a "big city" guy. There is not even a single traffic signal in the town where I currently live, and I like it that way.

Nonetheless, there I was in Yew York. My son and I were doing a ton of exploring. His apartment is close to Morningside Park and Riverside Park and just a short train ride down to Central Park and the places he wanted to show me on the Upper West Side. I was watching the constant interplay of humanity and trying to soak in everything I could.

Which brings me to the subway ride. I can see how the charm of the NYC subway would wear off quickly to those who ride it every day. But, being a noob, I was still kind of intrigued by the whole operation ... until about five minutes into the ride. A guy who clearly had been drinking decided that I should be able to tell him the easiest and fastest way to get to Yankee Stadium. My insistence that I did not know was unacceptable to him, and the more I told him that I didn't know, the angrier he seemed to get.

When he turned away from me and I heard him describe me as an "uppity (expletive)," I started thinking that I was about to graduate from my first solo New York City subway ride into my first New York City subway fight. His demeanor and body language gave me every indication that things were about to escalate. I wrapped my fingers around the Sharpie marker I often carry in non-permissive environments and got ready for my night to take a turn as we approached another subway stop.

Just then, a guy sitting off to my right chimed in, saying, "Hey buddy. You wanna get to Yankee Stadium? Get off this train right here and look for the No. 1 train. Take you right to the front gate."

How fortuitous. The doors opened. The drunk cursed me and exited, and the train rolled on. I looked at the guy and said, "Good thing you knew how to get to Yankee Stadium."

His reply was a perfect example of quick-thinking conflict avoidance.

"How the (expletive) should I know how to get to (expletive) Yankee Stadium? I don't even know if he can get on the 1 train from that station. I just wanted that drunk (expletive) off the train."

Problem solved. As I've said for years, the best fight is the one you're not in.

The rest of the ride was uneventful. Emerging from the subway and turning right onto 125th Street brought the aforementioned shirtless man into view. The cop in me wanted to say, "Excuse me, sir. Are you OK?" But since "community caretaker" is no longer part of my job description, I knew the best course of action was to simply leave him alone.

The best fight is, say it with me, the one you're not in. As Grandpa Bruno always used to say, "Not my circus. Not my monkeys."

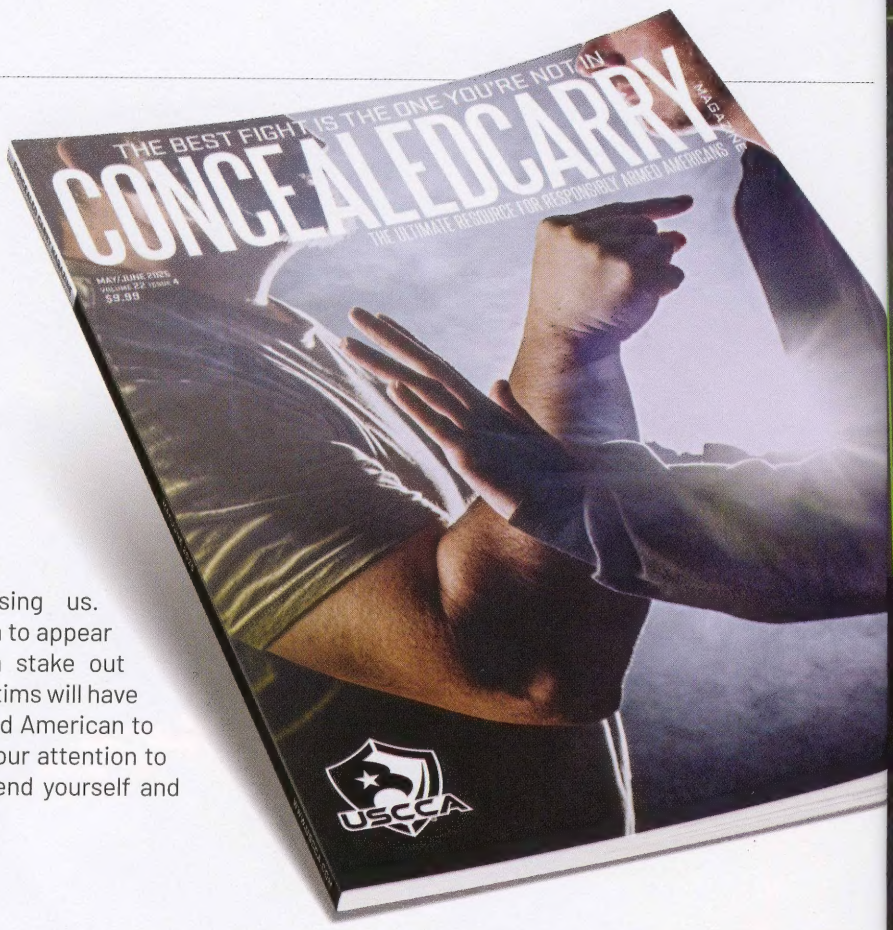
The new KelTec® PR57™, with an innovative rotary barrel, is the lightest 5.7 pistol available. Inspired by real-world defensive needs, its unique top-loading design replaces traditional magazines with stripper clips, creating a slim, compact and easy to use firearm with a 20+1 capacity. The new PR57 redefines concealed carry. Your future is now. Learn more.
INNOVATION. PERFORMANCE.
KEL TEC
"THE FUTURE OF CONCEALED CARRY?"
NRAPUBS.com
©2025 Kel-Tec CNC Industries, Inc

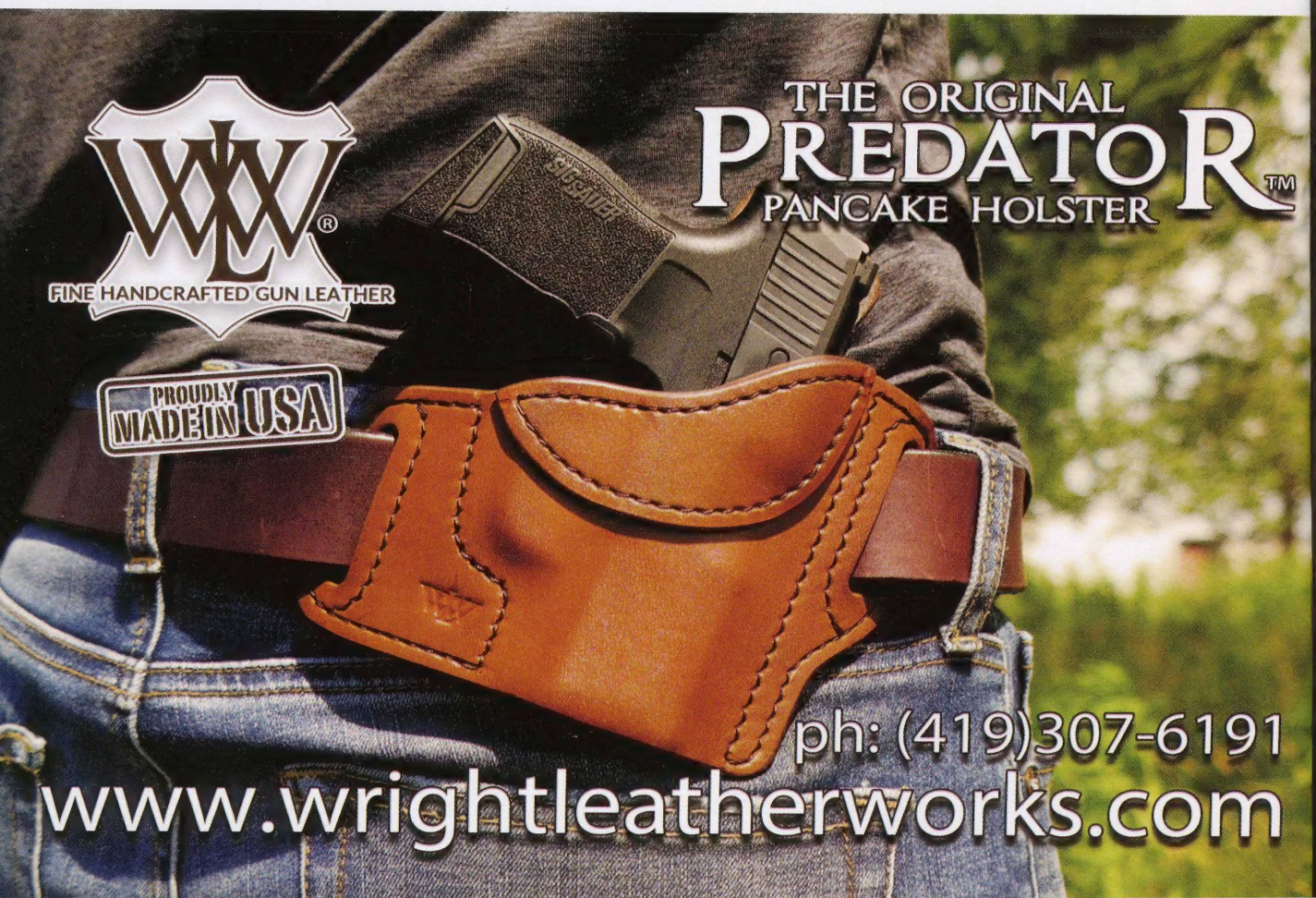
'I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE'

GET OUT WHILE YOU CAN

Violence has a way of surprising us. Explosively angry people can seem to appear out of nowhere. Predators often stake out areas through which they know potential victims will have to pass. It's up to you as a responsibly armed American to remain vigilant and prepared — vigilant in your attention to the world around you and prepared to defend yourself and your loved ones against whatever may come.

USCCA





ELITE
SURVIVAL SYSTEMS
MAINSTAY™
CLIPLESS IWB HOLSTER
Stays in place as you draw. Carry inside the waistband or pocket. Ambidextrous. Won't flake or disintegrate over time. Available in 20 sizes to fit most handguns.
Learn more at EliteSurvival.com
Toll Free 866.340.2778

TASTE TEST

WHAT SOME PEOPLE ARE CERTAIN YOUR CLOTHING SAYS ABOUT YOU

QUESTION:

I am a USCCA Member who receives your magazine every month, and I really enjoy reading it. I am also a big fan of punk and metal music and often wear T-shirts of my favorite bands. While I avoid graphic or violent imagery out of respect for the public, many bands in these genres explore dark, morbid or occult themes. I worry that if I were ever in a defensive situation while wearing one of them, a prosecutor might use my attire against me in court, playing on any negative perceptions that a jury might have. The last thing I want is for a prosecutor to try and portray me as someone who's obsessed with mayhem and destruction. (I'm not, by the way.) Is this a realistic concern?

Scott, California

ANSWER:

Thank you for reaching out, Scott, and I have to admit that this is one I've thought about in the past, dating back to my high school years.

Since about age 13, I've worn T-shirts emblazoned with everything from the mohawked Travis Bickle character from the Scorsese classic Taxi Driver *(1976) to Johnny Cash giving the finger to all kinds of other bizarre stuff in between. Like you, I was (and remain) a big fan of all kinds of music and other pop culture, and some of my tees got pretty wild there for a while. Once I got into teaching, I moderated my clothing choices, and once I got into law enforcement, my tastes got downright boring. It's a style hole out of which I'm still trying to climb.*

The most difficult part about media in all of its forms is that something like a third of all humans don't have a sense of humor, but it goes far beyond jokes. For whatever reason, they are incapable of taking any image, statement, story or sound at anything other than face value. This is why laugh tracks were invented for radio: About a third of the listeners who'd been accustomed to sitting in a vaudeville house no longer had the social cue of everyone else around them laughing. As such, they didn't know when the jokes were getting delivered. You'll notice that laugh tracks jumped right from radio to television. The issue hadn't gone away. Which brings us to your (and my) shirts.

I once heard a (possibly apocryphal) story about how early on in Black

> **BUT WITH THAT THIRD OF THE POPULATION OUT THERE WHO CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MOVIES AND REAL LIFE, I REST (AND CARRY) A LOT EASIER KNOWING THAT I DRESS A LITTLE MORE CONSERVATIVELY THAN I MIGHT HAVE A FEW YEARS BACK.**

Sabbath's existence, Tony Iommi or Geezer Butler mentioned to Ozzy Osbourne how odd it was that people liked horror movies and that if people liked horror movies, they might like horror music too. You can find various instances of Ozzy retelling the band's origin story online, but that's 55 years and a lot of drugs and alcohol ago, so I don't know whether I entirely trust his memory. But the important part is this: People do like horror movies, and people do like horror music, and they have for as long as movies and music have been around.

Even so, it will take an excellent attorney to be able to explain the fact that none of this is new; that American country music was in large part founded on grisly British Isles "murder ballads" sung throughout pre-Revolutionary-War Appalachia — songs of men murdering women and women murdering children and then the murderers either getting hanged or killing themselves. They're pretty gnarly, and they even made a weird comeback in the folk-music movement of the early 1950s. (An internet search for the lyrics to "Knoxville Girl" or "Tom Dooley" will get any doubters up to speed.) And as far as rock-and-rollers go, there's few scenes less rock 'n' roll than the Greenwich Village folk scene in 1959.

Your shirt that someone might find "disturbing" is certainly no more "disturbing" than a copy of the old Weird Tales *pulp magazine from the 1930s or Boris Karloff playing the lead in Mary Shelley's* Frankenstein. *Is it for everyone? No, it's not. But neither he nor she were looking to cut up any cadavers, and you just happen to like what I might call horror music. And there's nothing wrong with that.*

Unfortunately, even after the explanation that I've given here, about a third of Americans will still judge you by the tee on your torso. I understood that a third of my students' parents would judge me in a similar way and that about a third of those in the community I served as a deputy sheriff would as well. So I hung up all of my weird tees (even the one that featured Johnny Cash giving the finger) because, unfortunately, some people just wouldn't understand.

I hate to say as much, but even though what you wear will always be your call, I'd put a Cannibal Corpse t-shirt somewhere between a Punisher skull on your Glock's baseplate and a "KEEP HONKING, I'M RELOADING" bumper sticker on your car. It shouldn't make a difference in the wake of a self-defense incident. One is strongly tied to a veteran's pride of his combat service in Afghanistan or Iraq, and the other is simply dark humor. But with that third of the population out there who can't tell the difference between movies and real life, I rest (and carry) a lot easier knowing that I dress a little more conservatively than I might have a few years back.

Ed Combs
Senior Editor

USCCA | CONCEALED CARRY MAGAZINE

CHAIRMAN & CO-FOUNDER
Tim Schmidt

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Kevin Michalowski

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Ken Wangler

MANAGING EDITOR
Jared Blohm

ART DIRECTOR
Dusty Reid

SENIOR EDITOR
Ed Combs

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Carla Dickmann

EDITOR-AT-LARGE
Beth Alcazar

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Frank Jastrzembski

SENIOR DESIGNER
Kelly Welke

EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATOR
Jason Brauncowski

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Ken Wangler • Dusty Reid • Kurt Adams
Daniel Acker • Keith Kamikawa

COLUMNISTS
Beth Alcazar • Ed Combs • Anthony L. DeWitt
Chip Eberhart • George Harris • K.L. Jamison
Michael Janich • Mark Kakkuri • Tamara Keel
Duncan Mackie • Kevin Michalowski • Angel Olin
Tim Schmidt • Patrick Sweeney

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Bob Campbell • Anthony L. DeWitt
Dick Fairburn • George Hupp • Kristen Jackson
Nick Jacobellis • Michael Janich • Dorsey Kindler
Brad Lewis • Ed Marshman
Joel T. Nadler • Dave Young

Published for USCCA by:
DELTA DEFENSE LLC
1000 Freedom Way, West Bend, WI 53095

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT
(877) 677-1919 • support@deltadefense.com

FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Tanner Pruett
(262) 483-1410 • ads@uscca.com

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
Carol Busse
(262) 806-0117 • carol.busse@deltadefense.com

Concealed Carry Magazine (USPS: 022-302, ISSN: 1550-7866), Volume 22, Issue 4, May/June 2025. Published 8 times a year, monthly, except combined issues: Feb/Mar; May/June; Aug/Sept; and Nov/Dec. By Delta Defense LLC, 1000 Freedom Way, West Bend, WI 53095. Periodicals postage paid at West Bend, WI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Concealed Carry Magazine*, 1000 Freedom Way, West Bend, WI 53095.

Signed articles in *Concealed Carry Magazine* reflect the views of the author, and are not necessarily the views of the editors at Delta Defense LLC. *Concealed Carry Magazine* and the U.S. Concealed Carry Association are registered trademarks of Delta Defense LLC. All Rights Reserved. Copyright 2004-2025 by Delta Defense LLC. Reproduction, copying, or distribution of *Concealed Carry Magazine* is prohibited without written permission.

STAY IN TUNE

I found the "Personal-Protection Plan" issue (February/March 2024) extremely useful and timely! I am a USCCA Instructor in Massachusetts and quite often hold forums to help folks develop and implement such plans, and one of our key components was mentioned in Tim Schmidt's "Tune-Up" piece [Page 6]. I remind attendees how important updates are to keep their plans front of mind; I recommend quarterly. I suggest deeply involving family members and to make it a date night afterward for dinner. Lots of positive follow-up emails [told] me that the info landed well. Thanks, *Concealed Carry Magazine*!

Brian, via email

GUN-SIZE TERMINOLOGY

On Page 59 of the February/March 2025 issue ["Defensive Distances"], you reference "medium-frame defensive handguns" and then cite the S&W M&P Compact. When I Google "medium-frame defensive handguns," I get a list of many pistols characterized as "compact."

It seems to me that gun-size terminology is rather loose. What are the defining characteristics of subcompact, compact, medium-sized and full-sized pistols? Is it barrel length?

Anonymous, via email

This is a weird one and, like many topics in the firearms world, is complicated by terminology that has been around for more than a century — technology that has changed at anywhere from rapid to breakneck speeds and a user base that went from basically all male to male and female. In short, no; there is not a fixed definition of "compact." Some might claim there is, but if they do, I'd be willing to bet that even a cursory investigation would reveal that they were looking to defend a brand or model by doing so.

For a long time and to a certain extent even today, "full-sized" just meant (and means) the biggest model a company makes; picture a 5-inch-barreled 1911. "Compact" means a size smaller than that largest one, which would be a 4.25-inch-barreled Colt Commander. And if the company in question makes an even smaller model, it gets to be the "subcompact" — which, in the Colt 1911 world, is a 3.5-inch-barreled Officer. (There is also a 3-inch-barreled Colt Defender, which is a good example of the issue we're going to dig into next.)

The 9mm Glock 17 is a full-sized pistol and always has been. But pretty early on, it became clear that a slightly smaller version would be perfect for a lot of shooters, so the compact G19 was released. A subcompact G26 made for an excellent companion backup pistol, and everything was pretty calm until the "slimline" G42 in .380 ACP and then 43 in 9mm came along. And then everything got even more complex with the G43X and similar models, which were dimensionally larger than the 42 and 43 but still single-stacks.

What I've just listed out is a microcosm of the entire handgun industry's naming conventions: Enough new products get added to a line that initially only had a few offerings that you have to either make up new terms (the current darling is "micro-compact") or try to get everyone everywhere to change how they use a word they've been using for a long time.

So I use "small," "medium" and "large." They're loose enough to cover almost all pistols and allow me to avoid corporate terminology and communicate in the clearest possible language.

Ed Combs
Senior Editor

ALL ABOARD

In the February/March issue of *CCM*, the letter from Steve ["Leaving Your EDC at Port," Letters to the Editor, Page 14] caught my attention on the topic of carrying on an ocean cruise. I'm a "veteran" of 16 ocean cruises over the past several years as well as a retired police LEOSA/HR218 concealed carrier.

One of my cruises was from Seattle — through the inside passage of Alaska — with one stop in Canada per maritime law. On a whim, I contacted the cruise line's security staff beforehand. I learned their policy was that if I were to check in my carry pistol with the ship's security officer while boarding, it would be held in security. If I wished, I could check it out while [we were] in U.S. ports, which are plentiful in Alaska. Upon reboarding after shore activities, [I could] check it back in with security and head for the buffet. In foreign ports, don't even ask.

That particular cruise line was Royal Caribbean, and that was a few years ago. Others may have similar policies. I suggest you make arrangements well beforehand rather than show up armed at portside. Cruise security lines are similar to TSA airport lines, only longer.

Ron, Oregon

OWNING UP

Love all that you do at USCCA. I've been a member for seven years now and have been helped immeasurably by *CCM* and eagerly look forward to it each month.

Just a quick note about Elijah Henry's story "Three Seconds" [January 2025, Page 86]. I was dumbfounded upon reading the storyline, as it mirrors almost exactly a similar and equally stupid move of my own when [I was] cleaning my 9mm. The parallels are too many, and the photo you used even featured the very make and model Taurus I own and discharged while prepping it to be cleaned. Unfortunately, I reversed the "safe" procedures and cleared the chamber before dropping the mag — which, of course, chambered another round. Since it's necessary to depress the trigger as part of the motion to remove the slide, a loud "boom" was the result. The good news is that the only casualty was my pride and a pewter desk mug that paid the ultimate price.

You can't let up for even just a moment, fatigued or otherwise. Kudos to Henry for being willing to "fess up" as a lesson to us all.

Richard, Montana

VIKTOS
TACTICAL VERSATILITY
HIP PACK $75
Carry it crossbody or at the waist, the Upscale™ Hip Pack delivers quick access to your concealed carry. Built from weather-resistant nylon ripstop with carbon fiber reinforcement, it features a magnetic phone flap, ambidextrous pistol compartment, and adjustable strap with magnetic quick-release. Includes a universal Hookie™ holster and 1-year warranty.
ALL VIKTOS® PRODUCTS ARE DESIGNED AND DEVELOPED BY US VETERANS.
WWW.VIKTOS.COM
Available in: Midwatch, Black, Greyman & VS17

SOG SEAL XR TI

ONE TOUGH PUP

Once you get over a certain size of pocketknife, you're looking for fixed-blade dependability in a folding package. That's a tall order, and the SEAL XR Ti lands you about as close to that tall order as you can get.

This entirely American-made knife is a beefy handful with a premium-steel blade and titanium liners, which substantially reduce its overall weight. And while its glass-reinforced nylon scales definitely allow for excellent purchase and feel in hand, the knife features a locking mechanism that really makes it stand out. The "XR" lock design ensures that the knife can't open unless you want it to and that it will remain open until you want it closed. It ships with black, olive drab and flat dark earth scales from **SOGKnives.com**.

It's time to upgrade.

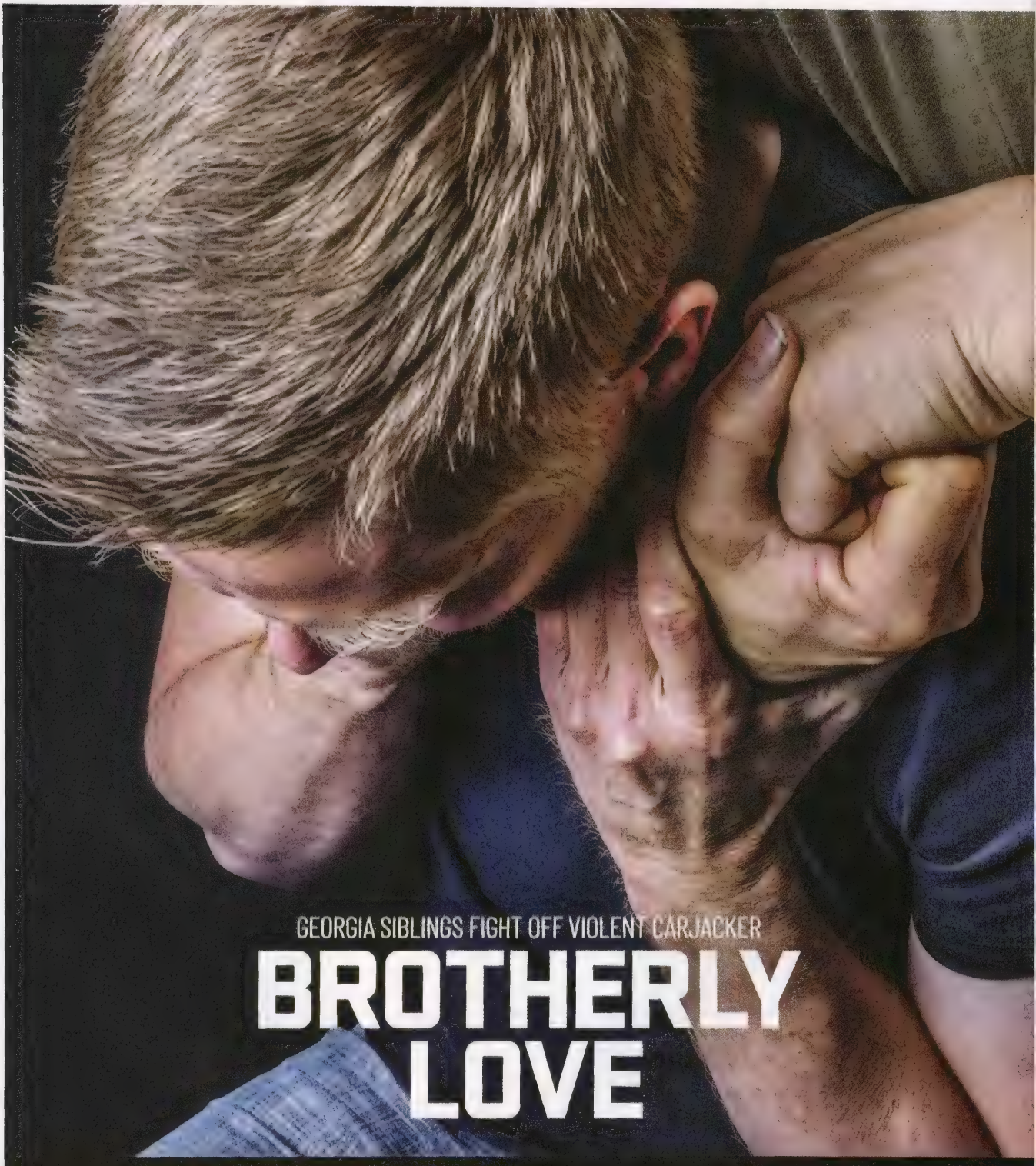
Our new **Distressed Leather Perfect Holster** allows you to carry a spare magazine INSIDE the holster, and pretty much anything you can think of on the OUTSIDE.

Use the outside elastic pockets for things like your cell phone, a pen, or flashflight. The more you carry, the less it looks like a holster!

SNEAKY PETE

www.SneakyPete.com

(Appearance doesn't magazine not included)



GEORGIA SIBLINGS FIGHT OFF VIOLENT CARJACKER

BROTHERLY LOVE

Two brothers were sitting in their car one afternoon when an armed stranger attempted to steal their vehicle. A struggle ensued, with the carjacker putting the driver in a headlock. The passenger shot the assailant, ending the attack. Police later arrested the carjacker, who had attempted another carjacking earlier that day.

WRDW-TV Channel 12, Augusta, Georgia

DANIEL H9

CONTROL FREAK

WORLD CLASS FIREARMS
DESIGNED & MANUFACTURED
IN BLACK CREEK, GEORGIA, USA

DANIELDEFENSE.COM/DH9

DANIEL DEFENSE
FREEDOM. PASSION. PRECISION.

ILLINOIS GOOD SAMARITAN STOPS DOMESTIC ASSAULT

A good Samaritan saw a man assaulting a woman in broad daylight on a Chicago street. When the citizen intervened, the male attacker drew a gun. The good Samaritan, legally carrying his own firearm, responded by shooting him, ending the attack. The wounded assailant later died at the hospital. Police are still investigating the incident.

CBSNews.com

TEXAS DISPUTE LEADS TO GUNFIGHT

A Hewitt man had just arrived at work when an assailant fired multiple rounds at him with a rifle but missed. The victim drew his own firearm and returned fire, striking the attacker twice. The gunman fled but was later arrested at a hospital where he sought treatment for his wounds.

Waco Tribune-Herald, *Texas*

ILLINOIS HOMEOWNER CONFRONTS INTRUDER

A Champaign man awoke to find an intruder inside his home. After arming himself, the man confronted the intruder, who attacked him. In the ensuing struggle, the homeowner fatally shot the intruder. The homeowner sustained minor self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

WCIA.com, Champaign, Illinois

LOUISIANA WOMAN DEFENDS AGAINST DOMESTIC ASSAILANT

A Baton Rouge man assaulted the mother of his child during an argument in front of their child. When the attack turned violent, the woman accessed a firearm to protect herself and her child. She shot the assailant, who was later arrested after receiving medical treatment.

Baton Rouge Police Department Facebook Page, Louisiana

FLORIDA RESIDENT THWARTS HOME INVADER

A Ruskin man confronted a home invader at around midnight. Fearing for his life, the man fired multiple rounds, killing the intruder. Law enforcement offered condolences to the homeowner as he recovered from the traumatic event.

MSN.com

TENNESSEE RESIDENT FENDS OFF SHOOTERS

Following a Memphis street fight, two of the fighters — one a 14-year-old boy — left but returned shortly after with guns and opened fire on a nearby house. A resident drew his own firearm and returned fire, wounding both attackers. The suspects fled but were later arrested when they sought medical attention.

ActionNews5.com, Memphis, Tennessee

MICHIGAN WOMAN SHOOTS EX-BOYFRIEND

A Warren woman was at home when her ex-boyfriend forced his way inside. When he began chasing her, she armed herself and shot him once, causing him to flee. He later died at a nearby hospital. Police are still investigating the incident.

ClickOnDetroit.com, Michigan

TEXAS MAN DEFENDS AGAINST DRIVE-BY SHOOTING

A Mesquite man was walking with a family member when gunmen in a passing car opened fire. The victim returned fire and then called police. Authorities are still investigating, as the victim did not know the assailants or the motive behind the attack.

KDFW-TV Channel 4, Fort Worth, Texas

CONNECTICUT HOMEOWNER DRIVES OFF CAR THIEVES WHO OPENED FIRE ON HIM

A Stratford man heard noises outside his home and, upon investigating, found two men attempting to steal his vehicles. When the homeowner confronted the suspects, they opened fire on him. The man returned fire and drove them off. No injuries were reported.

WTNH-TV Channel 8, New Haven, Connecticut

KENTUCKY MAN SHOT AFTER TRYING TO ENTER HOME

Deputies in Laurel County responded to a late-night call about a shooting at a residence. The homeowner reported that a man had attempted to force his way inside the house. The homeowner fired a single shot, striking the suspect, who was later hospitalized. At the time of publication, investigators were still working to determine if charges would be filed.

LEX18.com, Laurel County, Kentucky

ARMED CITIZEN DEFENDS AGAINST ALASKA DRIVER

A Juneau man called police to report that another driver was following him and acting aggressively. While the man was on the phone with dispatchers, the aggressive driver exited his vehicle and pointed what appeared to be a rifle at the caller. The caller, who was legally armed, fired multiple shots in self-defense, fatally striking the assailant. Authorities later determined the gun used by the deceased was a CO2-powered BB gun that resembled a real rifle. The armed driver remained on scene and cooperated fully with the investigation.

AlaskasNewsSource.com, Juneau, Alaska

OHIO HOMEOWNER FATALLY SHOOTS BURGLAR

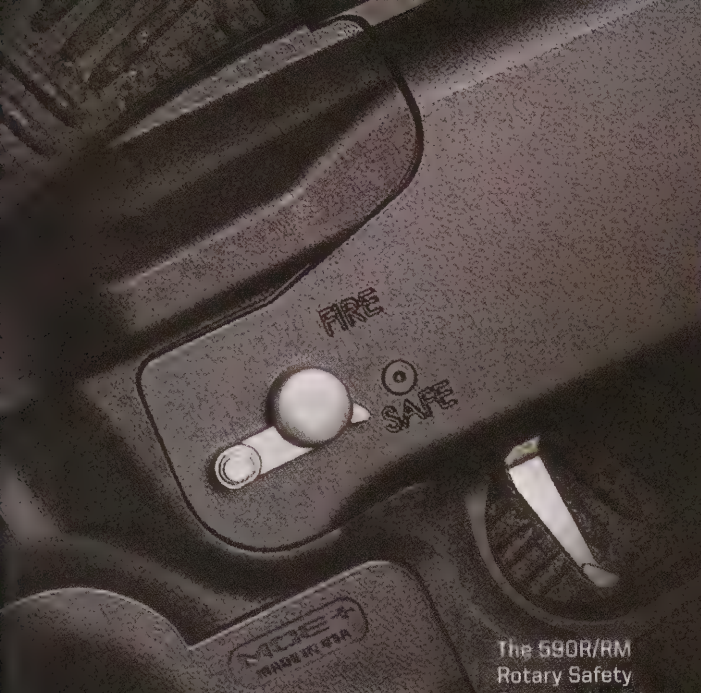
A man was shot and killed during an attempted burglary at a Dayton home in the early morning hours. According to police, as the suspect tried to break into the residence, the homeowner opened fire, striking him. The suspect died at the scene and was later identified by the Montgomery County Coroner's Office. The incident remains under investigation, and no charges have been filed at this time.

WHIO.com, Dayton, Ohio

©2025 O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc.

NEW ROTARY SAFETY SELECTOR

THE EVOLUTION OF TACTICAL PUMPS.



The 590R/RM Rotary Safety Selector location allows two-sided access without breaking grip.

SCAN CODE FOR MORE INFO

INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW 590R™ & 590RM™ SHOTGUNS — WITH ROTARY SAFETY SELECTOR.

The 590 tactical platform has been a mainstay for generations. And these new 590R/RM pump-actions are sure to please both new users and the Mossberg faithful alike with a host new groundbreaking features. From the new-design rotary safety selector, 5-position adjustable stock, compact ergonomically-shaped forend, flat profile trigger and integrated barrel/heat shield combination – these guns are all about functionality, customization and comfort. Available in 12GA, the 590R has a magazine tube, and the 590RM has a detachable box magazine. Both are offered with standard barrels with pop-up sights or with standoff barrels. *Let the evolution begin.*

#50762 - 590R™
12GA, 6+1 Capacity
18.5" Barrel w/Integrated Heat Shield

#50218 - 590RM™ Standoff
12GA, 10-Round Detachable Magazine
18.5" Standoff Barrel w/Integrated Heat Shield

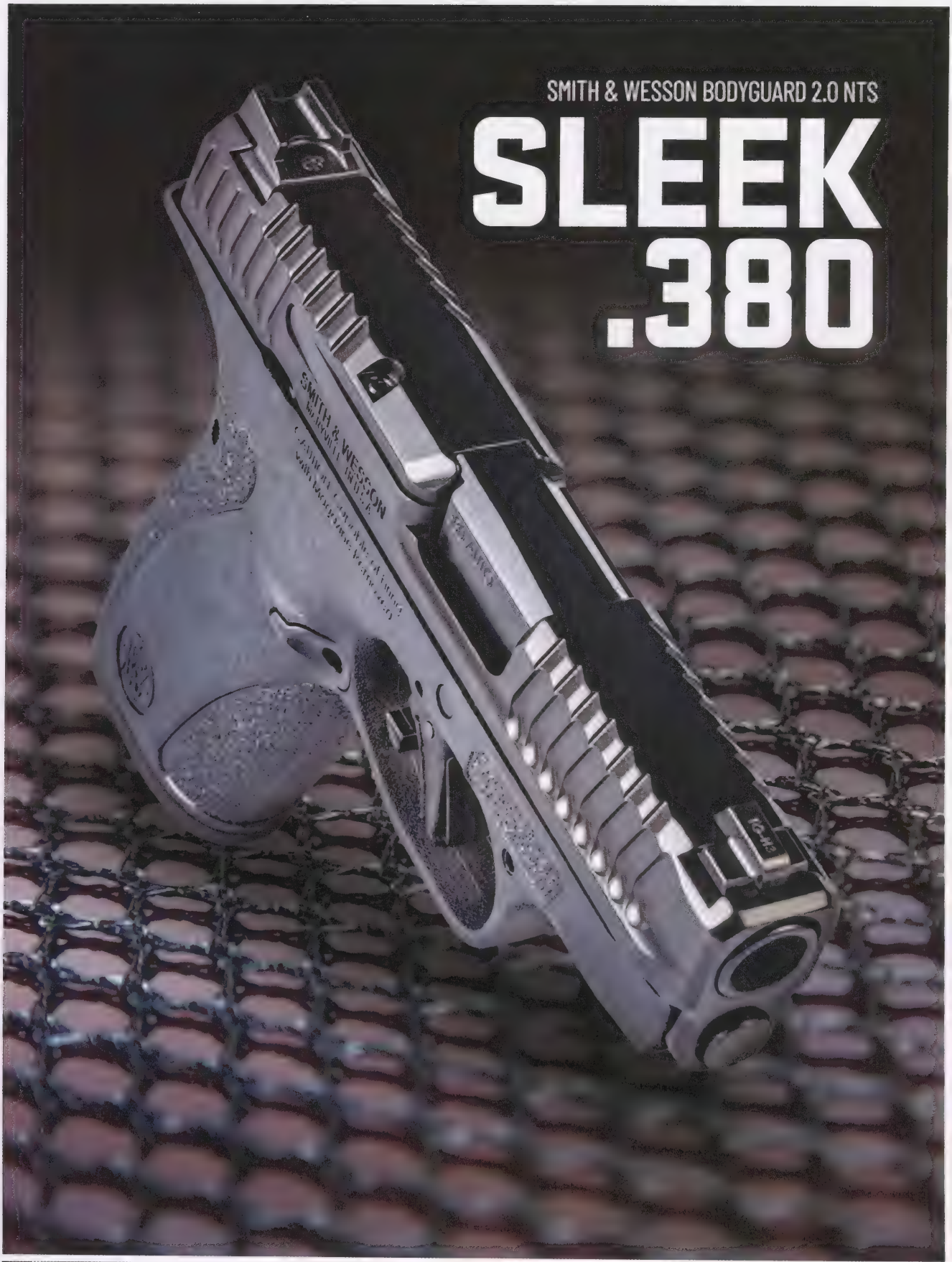
SAFETY TIP
Store firearms securely, inaccessible to children and unauthorized users.

Consult and comply with any and all applicable federal, state, and local: laws, regulations, requirements, and/or restrictions, including but not limited to those regarding the purchase, ownership, use, transport, and carrying of a firearm. Not all products are available in all states or jurisdictions.

Mossberg— Makers of dependable, hardworking firearms for more than a century.

LEARN MORE AT MOSSBERG.COM

MOSSBERG®
SINCE 1919


SMITH & WESSON BODYGUARD 2.0 NTS
SLEEK .380

SMITH & WESSON

BODYGUARD 2.0 NTS

MODEL | SMITH & WESSON BODYGUARD 2.0 NTS
ACTION | STRIKER-FIRED
CALIBER | .380 AUTO
WEIGHT | 9.8 OUNCES
WIDTH | 0.88 INCHES
OVERALL LENGTH | 5.5 INCHES
BARREL LENGTH | 2.75 INCHES
HEIGHT | 4 INCHES
GRIP | POLYMER
SIGHTS | BLACK
COLOR/FINISH | BLACK
BARREL MATERIAL | STAINLESS STEEL
FRAME | POLYMER
MAGAZINES | 2
CAPACITY | 10 (FLUSH MAG); 12 (EXTENDED MAG)
MSRP | $449

There are several important questions to consider when you're carrying a concealed handgun: When is a concealed carry handgun too small? What's the minimum chambering you should carry? What's the fewest number of rounds your concealed handgun should have on board? Should you make a greater effort to carry a larger, heavier handgun or are there viable smaller, lighter-weight alternatives? And why do so many of these questions feel like compromises?

They're all good questions. Ask a local law enforcement officer, a local gun-store employee or people online and you'll not only be inundated with wide-ranging opinions but also reminded of how subjective choosing a concealed carry handgun can be.

After 20 years of carrying concealed pistols, trying dozens of handguns, evaluating scores of holsters and considering countless aspects of self-defense, I've found that one truth remains: Subjectivity still plays a major role.

No single firearm is the right choice for everyone. The gun that works for me may not be the right gun for you. The right gun is one that not only proves itself in durability, reliability and accuracy but also fits me: my worldview, preferences, physical build and capabilities.

The Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 2.0 NTS fits me.

FEATURES

Even within the micro-handgun category — where dimensions push the physical limits of compactness — the right pistol must be big enough and small enough in all of the right places.

The Bodyguard measures 5.5 inches long, 4 inches high and 0.88 inches wide. While several guns measure close to these dimensions, even minor differences in the quarter-inch range can be significant. The same holds true for weight. The Bodyguard, for example, weighs just 9.8 ounces and, in this category, virtually every ounce matters.

As for chambering, the pistol is a .380 Auto with a capacity of 10 rounds in the flush-fitting magazine and 12 rounds in the extended magazine. Both magazines are small and lightweight. Having 22 rounds (or 23 if one is in the chamber and I topped off the mag) of modern self-defense ammunition — even .380 — is enough for me. By comparison, other subcompacts, including some very popular 9mms, often feel downright heavy and bulky.

The Bodyguard truly shines in both hand and holster, showcasing its excellent design. I can comfortably wrap two-and-a-half fingers around the stocks, with my trigger finger resting just an inch behind the muzzle on the stippled finger pad. The generous frame and backstrap provide ample purchase, ensuring the webbing of my hand is well-protected. The stippling on the stocks enhances my grip without snagging on covering garments.

The magazine release, slide release and takedown lever are all within easy reach of my thumb. The flat-face trigger with its built-in safety engages well with my trigger finger from every angle. That's it for external controls, as my review handgun is the No Thumb Safety (NTS) version. I prefer no thumb safety on a double-action-only pistol.

WITH THE RIGHT HOLSTER, POCKET CARRY ISN'T OUT OF THE QUESTION EITHER.

LOOKING OUT FOR YOU
A sleek little double-stack .380 can be a heck of a security detail, and Smith & Wesson's newest take on its Bodyguard line would be a welcome addition to anyone's battery of self-defense options.

One of my favorite features of the Bodyguard is its magazine release, which is robust and provides just the right feeling when I'm inserting or removing a magazine, loaded or empty. I also appreciate the Bodyguard's sights: a U-shaped rear notch paired with a Tritium front sight surrounded by a bright-orange ring. And one more standout feature is the slide serrations, located at the front and rear of the slide and angling up and over toward the top. These provide excellent purchase.

CARRY AND CONCEALMENT

When I say that a particular handgun "fits" me, I mean it in a broad sense. At a minimum it's about dimensions and weight, but more holistically it includes how much I enjoy the pistol — because that ultimately determines how often I'll actually carry it.

As the Bodyguard has traveled around on my side for a significant amount of time, I've noticed that I carry it more frequently and for longer periods than I carry other handguns. It doesn't get left behind in the locked console of a vehicle.

In terms of overall use, the 2.0 is catching up to the lightweight snub-nosed revolvers that have long been my go-to handguns when I'm heading out the door. Plus, it offers a magazine capacity that is equal to or greater than that of many other handguns.

My preferred concealment method for the Bodyguard is a simple inside-the-waistband holster at the 4 o'clock carry position. At only 0.88 inches wide and secured in a relatively skinny leather holster clipped to a real gun belt, the pistol carries with exceptional comfort and conceals well.

It's not a deep-cover carry setup, but drawing still requires a bit of extra manipulation, primarily using my strong-hand thumb and middle and ring fingers to lift the gun about half an inch. This allows the rest of my hand to wrap around it, with my trigger finger falling instinctively to the side of the frame.

Appendix carry is possible but not particularly comfortable for me given my average, relatively fit build. (I'm 5-foot-10 and weigh 180 pounds.) The Bodyguard has a bit too much length and height for the 1 o'clock position. However, the 3 o'clock position works just as well as the 4 o'clock. With the right holster, pocket carry isn't out of the question either. That said, I generally prefer to stick to one carry location — 4 o'clock — and focus on practicing a smooth and safe draw.

Switching to the extended magazine gives me two additional rounds and a full third finger around the stocks. In this configuration, carrying at 4 o'clock remains the most viable option for concealment. However, if I've reached the point of using my backup magazine, concealment is probably the least of my concerns.

A COMPELLING OPTION

Everyone has questions when it comes to choosing a handgun for concealed carry. For me, the Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 2.0 NTS delivers compelling answers — with equal measures of comfort and capability.

SOURCES
Smith & Wesson:
Smith-Wesson.com

Subcompact. Optics ready. Flat-face trigger with extra-short reset. Crowned barrel. Ambi-slide releases. Ambi-mag releases. Slide-top anti-glare serrations. Forward and rear grip serrations. Oversize trigger guard. Metal sights. Light rail. Textured control points. $469 MSRP. Tack-driving standard. RM1S.

ROST MARTIN

ONE AND ONLY

SHOOTING WITH ONE HAND

Single-handed shooting is a skill often seen in movies: heroes fending off bad guys or running from danger, all while handling a pistol with ease. Trying to stop a ne'er-do-well from proceeding with his or her evil plans? One hand on the gun! Running for your life while simultaneously taking down a zombie hoard? One hand on the gun! The thing is, it's not nearly as effortless as it looks on screen. In reality, shooting one-handed requires both physical and mental focus and can be pretty challenging without regular practice.

While two-handed shooting is the standard (since it provides more control and stability), firearms manipulation using only one hand is vital for scenarios in which your other hand is occupied, injured or, for some other reason, unavailable or inaccessible. It also helps improve your overall shooting ability and prepares you for unpredictable situations. But before we jump into some specific exercises to practice, let's review a few important pointers for one-handed shooting.

GRIP

Your grip is an important foundation when you're shooting one-handed (or two-handed, for that matter). For shooting with one hand, your dominant hand should firmly grasp the gun, ensuring that it stays stable during recoil. Position your hand high on the backstrap and wrap your fingers firmly around the grip. Since recoil can be more difficult to manage with only one hand, you may find it beneficial to cant (or angle) your wrist and gun slightly for more control of the gun's movement when it fires. Your non-shooting hand can relax by your side or hang naturally; don't tense it up trying to compensate for the lack of support.

STANCE

While you may not get to pick and choose how you stand in a dynamic critical incident, you can focus on stance during training exercises. Note that your stance should always be athletic and balanced, providing both stability and mobility. With one-handed shooting, however, your goal is to get behind the gun as much as possible. This will likely involve moving your dominant foot forward and leaning your body weight into the gun, with your shooting arm fully extended and your elbow rotated slightly down and in.

ONE-HANDED EXERCISES

Whether you're training for self-defense or competition or are simply refining your skill set, the drills outlined here can help you develop better recoil management, accuracy and speed with single-handed manipulation.

Dry-Fire Practice (No Ammunition)

Dry-firing is an excellent way to work on your single-handed shooting technique without using live ammunition. You can perform dry-fire drills in the comfort of your home (provided you follow safety protocols). This will help you perfect your grip, trigger pull and sight alignment.

- **Objective:** Focus on improving trigger control, grip and sight alignment.
- **Drill:** While holding your handgun with your dominant hand, focus on pressing the trigger without disturbing your sight alignment. Practice manipulating the trigger in a smooth, controlled manner, ensuring that the gun (and your grip) does not shift during the dry-fire action.

Slow-Fire Single

The focus here is on precision rather than speed, so the goal is to ensure that each shot is placed accurately on the target.

- **Objective:** Focus on proper trigger control and sight alignment, and take time between shots to reset and ensure you're staying in a controlled position.
- **Drill:** Set up a target at 5 to 7 yards. Get into a proper stance, hold the firearm with one hand and focus on hitting the center of the target with each single shot. (Take note if the gun seems to shift or jump, and address your grip and stance accordingly for optimum recoil management.)

One-Handed Multiple

Once you've become proficient with slow-fire, you can add in more shots. This is an excellent way to work on recoil management and, ultimately, improve your speed.

- **Objective:** Focus on recoil management and sight recovery.
- **Drill:** Set up a target at 5 to 7 yards. Start with two shots as quickly as you can while maintaining accuracy. Work on recoil management and reset your sights quickly between each shot. Move up to three and then four shots as long as accuracy is not compromised.

One-Handed Shooting With the Non-Dominant Hand

To be truly proficient, you should practice shooting one-handed with both your dominant hand and your non-dominant hand. While your dominant hand is naturally stronger and more coordinated, your non-dominant hand is important too; knowing how to use it will be essential in case of injury or other unexpected circumstances.

- **Objective:** Focus on building proficiency with both hands and learning how to adapt.
- **Drill:** Perform all of the same exercises described above, but use your non-dominant hand. This will feel awkward at first, but your skill will improve with consistent practice.

NOT JUST FOR THE MOVIES

As with any firearms training, safety is the top priority. Always follow the universal safety rules. Ensure that your gun is unloaded (with no ammo around) during dry-fire. And remember, regular practice is key to mastering one-handed shooting. With dedication, you'll develop a more natural, reliable and controlled single-handed shooting technique that can make all the difference in a shooting competition or in a real-life defensive situation.

Single-handed shooting isn't just for action flicks. It's a vital skill that can help you respond effectively in an emergency. Keep practicing and make sure that you'll be ready when it matters most.

Colorado is known for its stunning Rocky Mountains, world-class ski resorts and bountiful outdoor opportunities. It has a colorful history too.

In the 1800s, a major gold discovery in Cripple Creek sparked a gold rush. This discovery attracted thousands of people from the East who embarked on a dangerous journey through the Great American Frontier in search of fortune. As a result, new towns sprang up to accommodate the influx of settlers.

In 1893, Katherine Lee Bates climbed Pikes Peak near Colorado Springs and was inspired to write the poem that became the iconic song "America the Beautiful."

However, Colorado's history is also marked by darker moments. In 1913, the Colorado Coal Wars began, culminating in militiamen firing machine guns into a mining camp of 1,000 people, including wives and children of the workers, in 1914. The National Guard set fire to the camp and shot anyone attempting to escape.

The final piece of information serves as a stark reminder of why the Second Amendment was established: to safeguard the right of the people to keep and bear arms, ensuring that the security of a free state is maintained. Yet lawmakers in Colorado have continually encroached on that right.

SB 3, introduced by Rep. Tom Sullivan (D-Centennial) and Sen. Julie Gonzalez (D-Denver), initially sought to impose a ban on semi-automatic firearms, commonly referred to as an "assault weapons" ban. However, after Gov. Jared Polis (D) indicated he would veto the bill following its passage in the Senate in February, several amendments were added.

The bill now targets semi-automatic firearms with detachable magazines. Under the proposed law, an individual would need to apply for an eligibility card from his or her local sheriff, complete a safety course and pass a test to be eligible to purchase one of these firearms.

Rep. Ryan Armagost (R-Berthoud) spearheaded the amendment to include a transparency report on the bill's implementation costs as well as to delay the bill's enactment until August 2026. Armagost argued that the bill is "not about a safety course" but rather about creating "an unattainable goal" — making the process of purchasing a firearm nearly impossible for law-abiding citizens. He believes it's designed to make lawful firearms acquisition inaccessible.

As of this writing, the bill has passed both chambers and is awaiting Gov. Polis's signature.

Additionally, HB 25-1133, which passed the House with a 38-27 vote in February, would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase ammunition for rifles and shotguns. The bill has yet to pass in the Senate.

OpenState.com, ColoradoNewsline.com

FEDERAL FAILS

One argument often made by anti-gun activists and politicians is that the framers of the Constitution couldn't have anticipated the development of modern firearms and, therefore, such technology falls outside the scope of the Second Amendment.

However, this view reveals a lack of understanding about both the history of firearms and the intent behind the Second Amendment. In fact, the first-known "repeater" firearm was created more than a century before the Second Amendment was written. This early firearm, a wheellock made in 1580, could fire 16 rounds, roman-candle-style, with a single pull of the trigger. Subsequent weapons built on this design were capable of firing up to 30 rounds. In 1665, Hans Boringholm created the first "high capacity" firearm for hunting.

The anti-gunners are ill-informed in their knowledge of what the Founding Fathers were or were not thinking when they wrote the Second Amendment. In fact, Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to James Madison dated Jan. 30, 1787, wrote, "I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery."

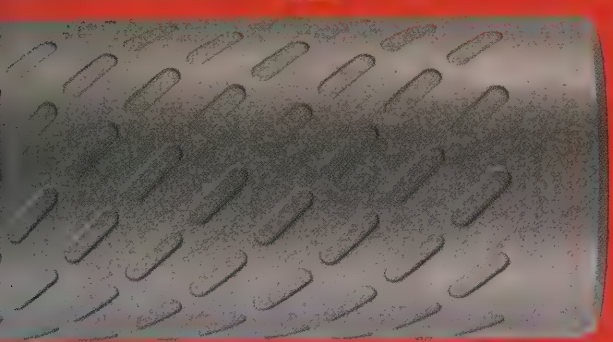
Unfortunately, many lawmakers in Washington, D.C. have fallen short of embracing the spirit in which this country was founded.

Sens. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) are among those lawmakers. They have introduced the Keep Americans Safe Act to "reinstate a nationwide ban on the sale, transfer, possession, import or manufacture of high-capacity gun magazines that hold more than 10 rounds."

This bill would:

- Ban the sale or transfer of high-capacity gun magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds to anyone other than law enforcement
- Ban the possession of a high-capacity gun magazine manufactured after the date of enactment by anyone other than law enforcement
- Authorize high-capacity magazine buyback programs
- Authorize law enforcement agencies,

You Know what they say,



~~size~~ SOUND matters.

Scan and save $200

SILENCER SHOP

including the FBI and the ATF, to seize and destroy high-capacity magazines possessed illegally

In a separate but equally misguided bill, the Age 21 Act, introduced by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and 18 other Senate Democrats, seeks to raise the minimum age for purchasing a semi-automatic rifle from 18 to 21.

If you think either or both of these bills sound like a terrible idea, please reach out to your elected representatives and voice your opposition.

ForgottenWeapons.com, AmericasFirstFreedom.org

STAY CLASSY, MASSIE

Have you ever wondered why lawmakers have set the age of 21 as the threshold for so many laws? Why is it that at 18, you can enlist in the military, fight and potentially die for your country, but you can't smoke a cigarette, enjoy a beer with friends or buy a handgun? Suddenly, you are too young.

During the Revolutionary War, soldiers were as young as 15, with the average age being 20. These young men fought and secured victory in the war for independence, ultimately helping to create what became the greatest country in the world. But today, at 20, you are considered too young to buy a handgun.

Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) looks to change this narrative by reintroducing HR 1643, also known as the Second Amendment For Every Registrable Voter Act (or, more commonly, the SAFER Voter Act). This legislation seeks to "repeal the federal law that prohibits voting-age adults, ages 18 to 20, from purchasing a handgun from a Federal Firearms License (FFL) holder."

This is not the first, second or even fourth time Rep. Massie has sought to pass this legislation on Capitol Hill. He has been advocating for it since 2018, when he first introduced the bill, and has continued to push for it in 2020, 2021, 2023 and again in February 2025.

Rep. Massie has consistently emphasized that "18-, 19- and 20-year-olds are considered adults and can vote on important public-policy issues" and that "as adults, these Americans should not be denied basic constitutional rights."

Rep. Massie is also the co-chairman of the Second Amendment Caucus in the 119th Congress.

All 10 co-sponsors of the bill are Republican representatives. If you support this legislation and live in a Democrat-led district, it's important to contact your representatives and share your opinion with them.

TARGETING TRADITION

Minnesota has long been known for its deep-rooted hunting and sport-shooting culture. The state's vast forests, open fields and abundant wildlife make it a prime location for hunting enthusiasts.

For generations, families have passed down the traditions of hunting deer, waterfowl and small game, fostering a connection to the land and a respect for conservation. Additionally, sport shooting, whether through competitive events or recreational target practice, is a beloved activity for many Minnesotans. These activities not only are a part of the state's heritage but also serve as a way for communities to bond and develop important skills, including gun safety.

Unfortunately, state lawmakers are seeking to disrupt this long-standing tradition of hunting and sport shooting in Minnesota both in the forests and at the shooting range.

Sen. Jen McEwen (D) has introduced SF 1596, a bill that proposes significant restrictions on firearms ownership, including banning the sale and transfer of many semi-automatic rifles, some shotguns and certain pistols. The bill outlines several key provisions, such as:

- A ban on most semi-automatic rifles equipped with detachable magazines
- A ban on semi-automatic shotguns featuring a pistol grip
- A ban on semi-automatic pistols with detachable magazines
- A ban on all "parts kits" used for assembling a firearm

In addition to these bans, the bill also includes provisions that would heavily restrict the transfer of these firearms. This includes:

- The prohibition of purchasing or selling any of these firearms
- The inability to leave these firearms to a beneficiary through a will, estate or trust
- A ban on transferring these firearms out of state
- A requirement for the executor, upon the owner's death, to either destroy the firearms or surrender them to law enforcement

Furthermore, the bill proposes the allocation of funds for a so-called firearms "buyback" program, which would be handled by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

On the other side of the debate, Sen. Bill Lieske (R) and four other Republican co-sponsors have introduced SF 352, or the constitutional right to carry a firearm acknowledgment. This proposed legislation seeks to eliminate an individual's need for a permit to carry a firearm in the state so long as that individual is legally eligible to do so under both state and federal law. If it's passed, this bill would also lift many of Minnesota's current restrictions on where an individual can carry a firearm, including in a vehicle, on a snowmobile and aboard a boat.

Currently, without a permit, an individual is allowed to carry a firearm in a vehicle only if the firearm is unloaded and stored in a closed trunk, a closed and fastened case, a gun box, or a securely tied package.

This ongoing debate between restrictive gun control and expanding firearms rights in Minnesota highlights the tension between regulating firearms and upholding constitutional rights, a discussion that is especially relevant for the state's many hunters, sport shooters and everyday law-abiding Americans.

GunOwners.MN.com

BODYGUARD® 2.0

EVERYDAY CONFIDENCE.

Precision in your palm - the Bodyguard® 2.0

This new handgun seamlessly combines being lightweight and small, with unparalleled performance. Enhanced features like a new ergonomic profile that allows for better control, a striker-fired flat-face trigger for improved accuracy, and increased capacity make the Smith & Wesson® Bodyguard® 2.0 ready to fit your needs.

Superior performance, perfect balance – Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 2.0.

Smith & Wesson®

EMPOWERING AMERICANS®

smith-wesson.com

Scan for More Info

2024 Smith & Wesson Inc. All Rights Reserved.

CONCEALED CARRY MAGAZINE
EDITORS CHOICE

CHARTER ARMS

PATHFINDER

SMALL BORE, BIG FUN

As the summer begins to heat up, it may be time to look for a small-frame training, plinking and everything-else pistol. Whether you're looking for a firearm to keep in the RV or a little revolver to take to the county range near the campground with your grandkids, the Pathfinder is tough to beat for the money. You can see the entire Pathfinder lineup, available in .22 LR and .22 Magnum, at **CharterFirearms.com.** | **MSRP: $413 and up**

KA-BAR

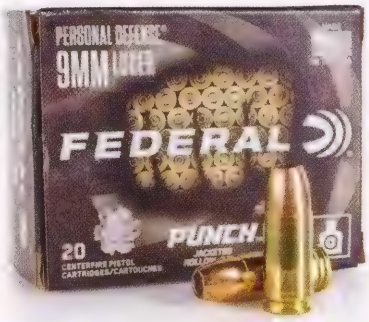
LAST DITCH KNIFE

The diminutive "LDK" from Ka-Bar was designed by instructor Greg Ellifritz after he'd found himself traveling in South America with few good options for a knife that would likely make it past a cursory pat-down. (Ellifritz considers it "cheap insurance" against kidnapping when it's rigged with a small handcuff key and hung inside the pants from the back belt loop.) You can order one at **KaBar.com** or pick one up at your favorite retailer (cord and key not included). | **MSRP: $22.21**

NEXTORCH

P91 TACTICAL LIGHT

While 5,000 lumens is an impressive output for any flashlight, where the P91 from **Nextorch.com** really stands out is in its dual-switch operation. The tailcap controls whether you're running it in momentary-on or strobe mode, while the side switch manages output levels, eliminating the annoying and confusing task of clicking through multiple settings. It's fitted with a strike bezel and is USB-C rechargeable. | **MSRP: $119.99**



FEDERAL

PUNCH 9MM

Jacketed hollow-points have come a long way in the last three decades, and Federal was a driving force behind many of those advancements. Though the law enforcement world was the major market for JHPs back in the '90s, Federal's taken all that it's learned and combined the most important attributes into a private-citizen-specific line called "Punch." You can go to **FederalPremium.com** to learn more. | **MSRP: $23.99/20**

ALIEN GEAR

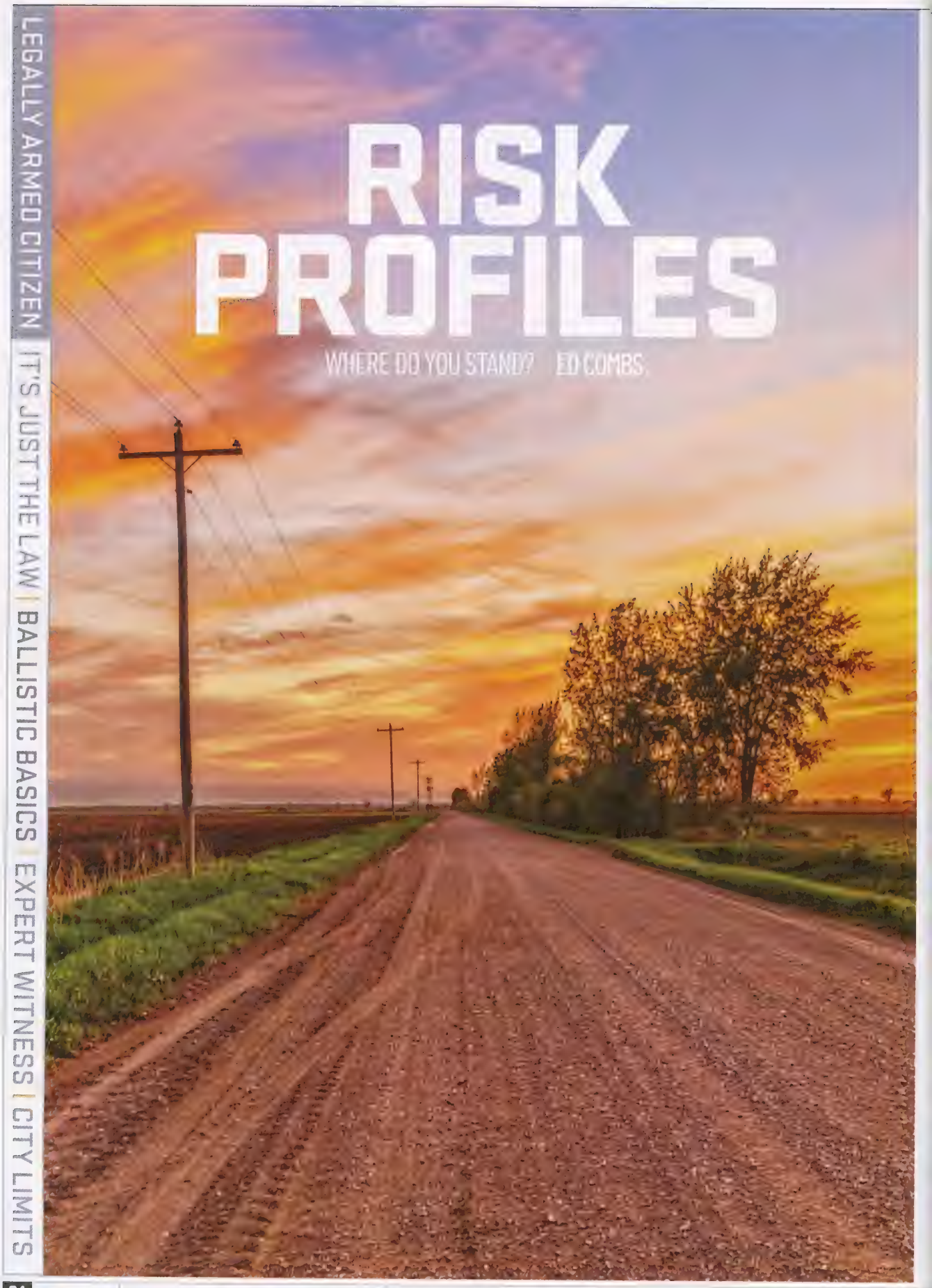
RAPID FORCE TAQ-STRAP

The debate is settled: You should keep a tourniquet handy whenever you're shooting. **AlienGearHolsters.com** has made that easier than ever for shooters who wear a drop-leg holster with this American-made unit that was originally designed for military and police use. It attaches to a belt or holster and can be adjusted one-handed. | **MSRP: $85**

FIOCCHI

HYPERFORMANCE SBR ENHANCED .223

Despite the popularity of AR-pattern pistols and the proliferation of NFA-registered short-barreled rifles, one reality remains unchanged: Most .223 and 5.56 ammunition is tuned to carbine- and rifle-length barrels. This 77-grain hollow-point offering from **FiocchiUSA.com** is tuned to pistol- and SBR-length barrels, making it ideal for both home-defense and self-defense use. | **MSRP: $18.99/20**



RISK PROFILES

WHERE DO YOU STAND? ED COMBS

It's a common statement in the training world: "Don't go anywhere with your gun that you wouldn't go without your gun."

Though it's become almost a cliche among instructors, it's sound advice. What they're saying is that you should not feel emboldened by the fact that you're armed and that you should not take risks while you're armed that you wouldn't take while you're unarmed.

That's all fine and good, but there's a catch: The risks you and I take are different, regardless of whether we're armed, and we only have so much control over those risks. If you work in a maze of cubicles in a large office, the risks you take walking out into a crowded parking lot at 5 p.m. will be different than the risks taken by someone who leaves the bar he or she closes at 3:30 every morning with a few thousand dollars in cash in a zippered bank-deposit bag. So before we go any further, we're all going to have to acknowledge that there will be risks inherent to your life and employment that will not be present in other people's lives. And the sum of those risks is your risk profile — the composite sketch, so to speak, of what you are most likely to face as far as criminal violence goes.

> "WE COULD SPEND HOURS LISTING OUT ALL OF THE RISKS THAT A MODERN AMERICAN MIGHT FACE, BUT WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO DO IS LIST OUT THE RISKS YOU ARE MOST LIKELY TO FACE IN THE COURSE OF YOUR WORK, PLAY AND DAY TO DAY.

For example, both executive editor Kevin Michalowski and I worked as law enforcement officers in the county in which the *CCM* editorial offices are located. There are people in this county whom he and I had a hand in incarcerating, and some people are more understanding about such matters than others. Moreover, our work often involves transporting guns and ammunition in quantity, and both guns and ammunition are high on the list of stuff criminals most like to steal. And just like it's a lot easier for an inmate to escape from the hospital to which he convinced the guards to take him than it is to escape from prison, it's a lot easier to try to steal guns and ammunition from a vehicle at a gas station than from the safes in which they're normally stored. So Kevin and I both carry 15-round guns at all times and often backup guns as well, and that's atop whatever less-lethal options we feel like toting about on any given day. Like a check-cashing storefront in a strip mall, we don't just have to worry about the usual idiots, and we have to act accordingly.

Granted, our risk profiles as gun-magazine editors isn't common. But if you haven't already, it'll be worth your while to draw up your own risk profile, as much of your personal-protection plan will be contingent upon it.

THE FIRST STEP MIGHT BE THE HARDEST PART

When you're computing your personal risk profile, you must consider the specifics of your lifestyle and profession that may contribute to you facing increased risk. News travels fast in the criminal community, and just because no one in your area's thought to do something yet doesn't mean it's not going to start happening. But there's a lot more to this than whether you're doing nightly cash drops at the local bank.

For a lot of you, if you do end up having to employ a firearm in self-defense, you probably already know the person against whom you will be forced to use it. Alcohol and drug problems are the biggest factors in violent crime, especially if we're talking about a defender who doesn't participate in illicit activities. Gang members and drug runners shooting it out over territory and deals gone wrong are easy to avoid if you aren't in the drug game. However — and I take no pleasure in stating this — many Americans are already on a first-name basis with their biggest security threats.

I couldn't list all of the times we've covered USCCA Members defending themselves against violent spouses, exes, family members, roommates and neighbors. So before you do anything else, you're going to need to take an honest look around and answer some questions you might have been avoiding. Only once you've assessed the humans in your immediate area and close social circles will you be able to proceed with a realistic personal-protection plan.

DON'T PUT OUT A 'CRIMINAL BAT SIGNAL'

For certain types of crimes and assaults, simply being a gun owner heightens your risk profile. It's not that you're personally more likely to encounter crime, but you'll be doing certain things and going certain places where very specific kinds of crimes can occur.

The most effective way in which you can lower your risk profile is to be as low-key a gun owner as you can. The more people see you walking in and out of your residence with gun cases, the more likely someone will realize there are guns in there and maybe want to break in. I've had good luck with golf-bag duffels for long guns and plain old backpacks for transporting cased-up pistols, but folks with attached garages will have a far easier time maintaining discretion.

Most importantly, if you're a recreational shooter, there's a good chance that you drive out to secluded areas and lay anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars' worth of firearms on a table. And it's not unheard of for criminals to stake out a secluded public range, catch a shooter alone and initiate a robbery.

The biggest difficulty in defending against this kind of attack is that it only occurs in the one place where it's 100 percent natural for a stranger to walk up next to you and load a firearm. Though this kind of assault is rare, you need to keep it in mind. Never leave firearms and ammunition unattended as you walk downrange to check and change targets. And, whenever possible, keep a holstered, loaded firearm concealed on your person at all times. If you own only one pistol, reload and holster up after each string

of fire. If you're a revolver shooter, train on your speed reloads. But don't just be out there in the middle of nowhere by yourself with an unloaded gun. This is, of course, a much bigger concern in the country than in the city, but I prefer to keep a loaded gun on me while I'm entering and leaving any public shooting range, crowded or secluded.

WATCH WHAT ELSE YOU BROADCAST

There's a popular internet meme that consists of a picture of a pickup truck with its back window almost completely covered by a decal that reads, "MOLON LABE," and it's captioned something along the lines of, "An ancient Greek phrase that means 'there's a free pistol inside this truck.'"

Now, like a lot of jokes, that one might hit a little close to home for some. (It certainly would have for me back in my 20s.) But the spirit of the joke is worth considering: As with at your residence, if you use the square footage on your vehicle to advertise the fact that you are a gun person, that can raise the chances that someone will try to break into that vehicle to steal from you.

I've been surprised over the years by how many people are confused to learn that a certain kind of violent criminal will target individuals who broadcast their firearms ownership. The thought is, *Wait a second ... I'm a gun guy. He shouldn't be messing with me.* But the fact is that violent criminals have more experience with violence and crime than all but the most hardened law enforcement officers. Worse yet, violent criminals get to spring attacks whenever they want to, which means they're a lot more likely to hit you over the head with a piece of rebar while you're bent over loading groceries into your vehicle than to approach you, knife in hand, like a real-life illustration from a bad-guy target.

Discretion is the name of the game. I spent years wearing every gun-manufacturer hat and shirt that anyone would give me at a gun show, but just a few years as a deputy sheriff taught me that it's likely better for people to not know I'm a "gun guy" until I want them to know.

If you're looking to improve your risk profile (and you should be), it might be time to rethink how you present yourself to the world. There's some excellent content on this very topic in a few of the features in this issue, and I don't want to step on anyone's toes by digging deeper into it here, but criminals are observant, and they're willing to do what decent people won't. Though it's your natural right to wear whatever T-shirt you want and drive around with whatever you want on your back window, threat-profile-wise, it's worth a second (or third) thought.

SOME FACTS ABOUT FENCING

It can be a shock to everyone except for the guy who had to pay for it how much everything in a plumbing, carpentry, or general contractor's truck or van is worth. Amounts will be all over the board, but the fact is that a great deal of that equipment is easy to "fence," or sell illegally for cash. And though firearms are often traceable through the criminal world by serial numbers owners have recorded, the same cannot be said for most tools.

If you've ever wondered why so many contractors and jobsite foremen — even in the big cities where it's traditionally very difficult to get a permit — have been carrying concealed since the 1960s, there's your answer. What this means is that if you have your vehicle loaded with a job's worth of tools for a project at your church or gun club and you don't always carry, you should think twice about leaving your sidearm at home.

OPEN HOUSE

One of the fastest-growing demographics in concealed carry is real estate agents. Some find this odd, but allow me to frame it the following way: Picture your job being almost unconditionally agreeing to meet strangers in vacant buildings, often after 5 in the evening. Now picture there being a 65 percent chance that you're female.

Once you put it that way, you understand that it isn't realtors only now realizing that they should maybe be carrying. It's more likely that many of them are finally allowed to carry and are jumping at the opportunity to do so. And if you're a broker and are not carrying, that's none of my business — but I would encourage you to look into it.

BE HONEST AND BE PROACTIVE

We could spend hours listing out all of the risks that a modern American might face, but what's most important for you to do is list out the risks you are most likely to face in the course of your work, play and day to day.

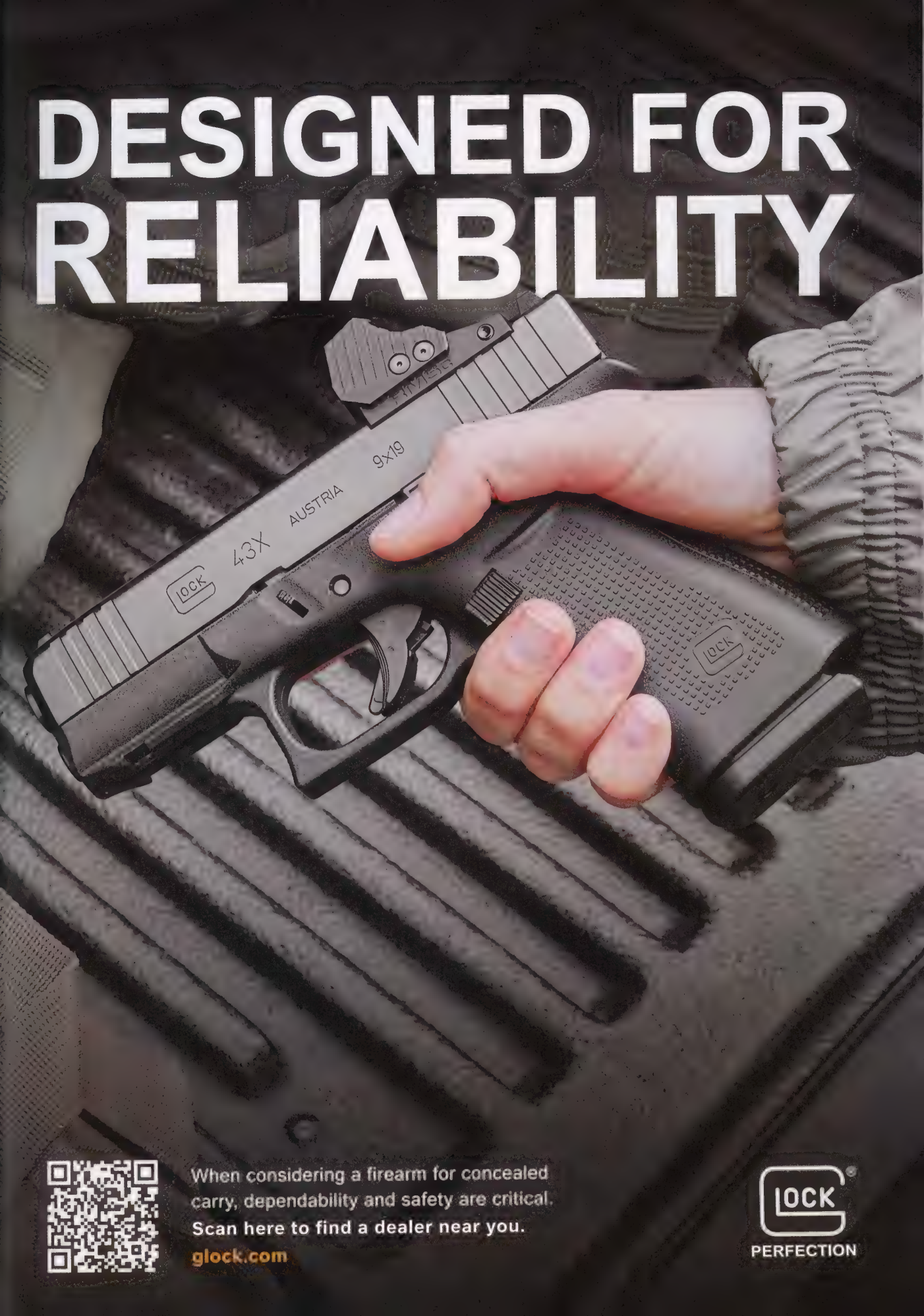
Do you hunt? While criminals know not to walk up to a duck blind and announce a robbery to half a dozen men holding loaded shotguns, robbing someone who is standing at a gas pump in rubber boots and head-to-toe camo is a different story (not to mention that hunting gear is about as easy to fence as power tools are).

Do strangers ever enter your home? Though your cleaning lady is unlikely to ever hold you hostage for the large quantity of cash she thinks you keep in a floor safe, her meth-head nephew and his meth-head friends might. This kind of misunderstanding is a common impetus for deadly home invasions and has been for a long time, brought to national attention by the 1959 Clutter family murders in Kansas that were later the subject of Truman Capote's book *In Cold Blood* and its film adaptation. As with everything else in the world of criminal predators, what they heard doesn't have to be true; it just has to be something on which they've decided to act.

PLAN NOW TO PREVAIL LATER

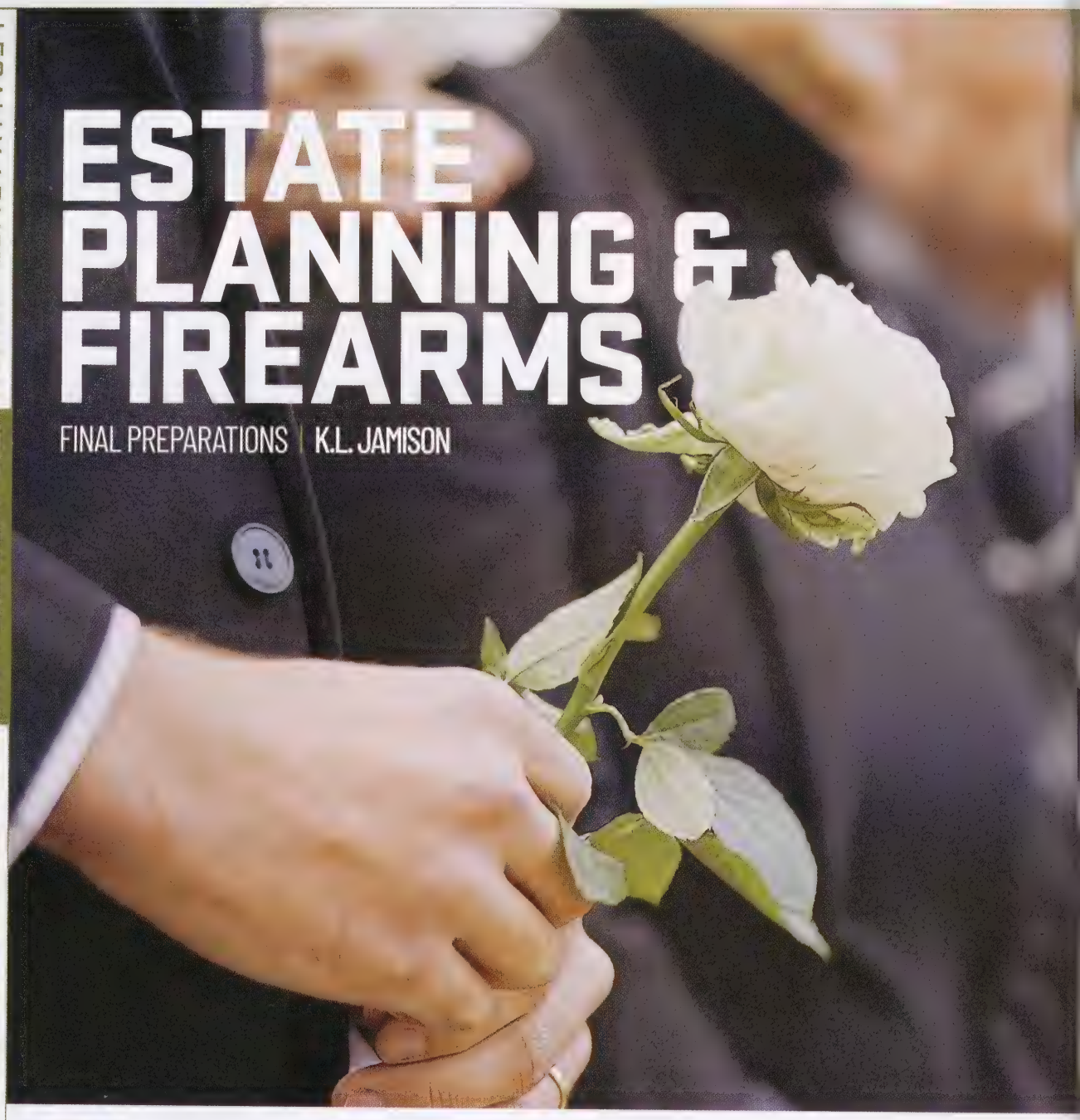
I've long maintained that statistics are a hoot until reality declares you an outlier. None of the scenarios that home-security consultants or self-defense instructors will run you through are necessarily likely, but they're the kinds of scenarios that are — if violence does befall you — the rough outline of what you'll be facing.

And this is the backbone of your personal-protection plan: Assess the most common types of criminal behavior, assess when and where you're vulnerable, and take the steps you can to minimize your vulnerabilities. If you can manage to do a decent job of that, and if you can manage to carry a loaded sidearm whenever it's legal to do so, your chances of victimization will be about as low as you can get them.


DESIGNED FOR
RELIABILITY
43X
AUSTRIA
9x19
When considering a firearm for concealed carry, dependability and safety are critical.
Scan here to find a dealer near you.
glock.com
GLOCK
PERFECTION

ESTATE PLANNING & FIREARMS

FINAL PREPARATIONS | K.L. JAMISON



For every gun owner, there will come a final gunfight. You won't be there when it happens, and you won't get a say in who wins — unless you prepare now. Because when that day comes, the fight will be over who inherits your guns.

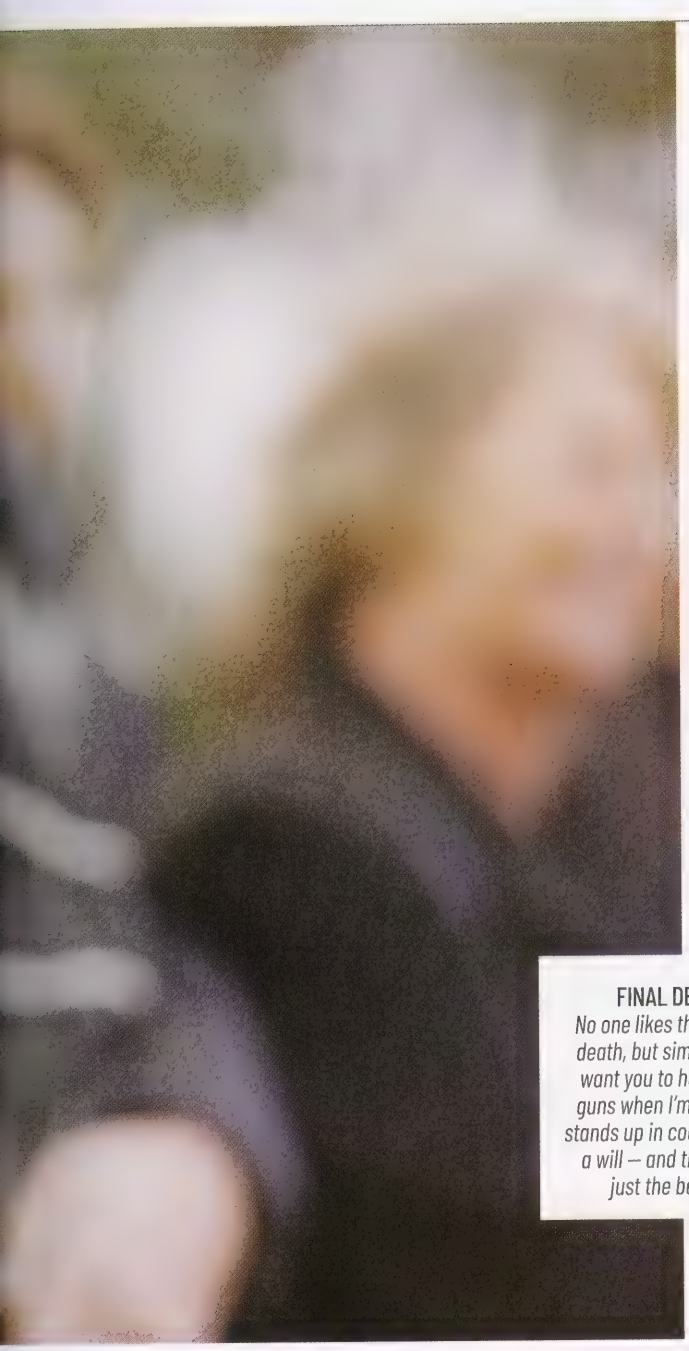
WILLS

The most basic preparation is a will. A will must be in writing, signed by the property owner (the "testator") and witnessed. In many cases, it must also be notarized. Each state has its own legal requirements for a valid will. The good news is that a will legally written in the testator's state of residence will be valid in any subsequent residence or place of death. The trick is to ensure that it's legally written.

Many testators write a list of property and designate who should receive each item. However, this is not a valid will. Nevertheless, an attorney may be able to turn it into one.

There are so-called "will kits" that provide forms claiming to result in valid wills. However, these kits have caused much mischief in the probate world and should be avoided.

Hiring an attorney will cost you money, but a probate action will cost much more. One testator once stated that he didn't care what happened after his death — that would be a problem for his heirs. However, that could also create a problem for carrying out his wishes. A probate court could interpret a defective will in a way that leaves property to someone the testator never intended — or even to



FINAL DEFENSE
No one likes thinking about death, but simply saying, "I want you to have all of my guns when I'm gone" rarely stands up in court. You'll need a will — and that might be just the beginning.

someone the decedent despised.

If a mistake is found in a will, the will could be thrown out, resulting in the testator's property being distributed according to statutes written by the state legislature. This alone should send people fleeing to an estate and trust lawyer.

Certain disappointed heirs have litigated wills far beyond any financial sense simply to prevent another heir from benefiting. Probate lawyers profit from this animosity and have a cynical toast "to the jolly testator who makes his own will."[1]

Twenty-five centuries ago, courts in the city-state of Athens recorded will contests.[2] Over the centuries, lawyers have developed techniques to minimize such disputes either by writing wills correctly to begin with or by including clauses that make disputes economically distasteful.

TRUSTS

A popular alternative to a will is a trust. Trusts have long been used to transfer property upon the death of a property owner (i.e., a "settlor") without the expense of probate.

In recent years, they have become particularly popular for those who own National Firearms Act (NFA) items,[3] though gun trusts can also be used for commonly owned firearms, which can be held in the same trust as NFA items. When a trust applies to purchase an NFA item, it does require the permission of the chief law enforcement officer in the jurisdiction. Trusts are considered artificial persons, and the federal government appears to trust them more than individual voters.

Persons listed as "responsible persons" under a gun trust can legally use the items independently of the settlor. Without a trust, such independent use would otherwise be illegal possession.

It's unwise to have a large number of responsible persons in a gun trust. Each time a trust purchases a new NFA item, every responsible person under that trust must submit his or her fingerprints and a passport-sized photo with the application. The more responsible persons in the trust, the greater the logistical burden.

The consensus among lawyers in the field is to exclude non-firearms and accessories in a gun trust. It's also considered unwise to label it as a "gun" or "firearms" trust, as certain banks and institutions become hysterical when they see these words and become unnecessarily difficult. In one case, a bank named as the executor of an estate involving firearms imagined legal complications and turned the guns over to the police for destruction. For this action, the bank should have been relentlessly sued.

All firearms owned by a trust are listed in an appendix. When a trust purchases a new NFA item, a copy of the trust is sent to the ATF along with Form 4 for approval. The appendix is not submitted to the ATF. The inventory of firearms owned by the trust is not registered anywhere until the death of the settlor. A trust itself does not register firearms.

The appendix to a trust has an added advantage. If a state or federal system bans a firearm or accessory, there is sometimes a "grandfather" clause that allows the existing owner to keep the banned item. The appendix serves as proof of prior ownership. This is a poor substitute for recognizing constitutional rights, but wills and trusts prepare for events far into the future. That future may be bleak. Sometimes, the best that can be done is to prepare for the worst.

TRUSTEES AND BENEFICIARIES

A trust is considered an artificial person and can exist beyond the lifespan of the settlor. Existing NFA items owned by the settlor can be transferred to the trust, but only upon payment of the $200 tax and completion of the required transfer paperwork.

The trust operates through a trustee, who has a long and

IF GUN OWNERS VALUE THEIR HEIRS ENOUGH TO BEQUEATH THEM FIREARMS, THEY SHOULD DO THEM THE FAVOR OF ESTABLISHING QUALITY WILLS OR TRUSTS.

detailed list of powers. The trustee can be — and usually is — the same person as the settlor. A few successor trustees, along with a method for appointing additional trustees, must be listed. People die at inconvenient times, and successor trustees ensure that someone is available to distribute the assets of the trust to the beneficiaries.

There can be any number of beneficiaries. However, the trust should also include what is referred to as a "remainder, rest and residue" beneficiary. This designated individual or entity inherits any property not specifically allocated to a named beneficiary or in the event that all other beneficiaries die before the settlor.

For instance, if a meteor were to strike a family reunion and obliterate all beneficiaries, the trust must specify where the trust property will go. This is typically an organization, as it proves more durable than a person. The NRA is a common beneficiary of last resort and even provides suggested language for that purpose.

THE MATTER OF MONEY

One of the requirements of a trust is that it be funded. This is something the ATF considers when it approves the purchase of NFA items.

If the trust has a bank account, this generally satisfies that requirement, though the account does not need to hold more than the cost of the new NFA item. Some collectors do not have a bank account for their trusts and have still successfully purchased NFA items through them. However, regulatory trends in this area continue to grow more restrictive. Having a straightforward answer to the funding question on paperwork from a financial institution provides a simple solution to an otherwise stupid government question.

Opening a bank account requires a government-approved identification number. But as an artificial person, a trust is not qualified for a Social Security number.[4] The solution is a Taxpayer Identification Number, also known as a "Federal Employer Identification Number." For a trust, this number is referred to as a "TIN." It can be obtained in about half an hour through the IRS website, free of charge. With this number, a bank will happily open an account for a trust.

VERBIAGE

Many people have copied trusts from the internet to create their own. While such a cut-and-paste job may form a legally valid trust, it may not accurately execute a settlor's intentions.

During a gun-trust seminar, an ATF agent responsible for reviewing gun-trust purchases noted that many of them were copied from online. In one case, the settlor failed to notice that copied language directed trust guns to a woman in central Kansas. It was not the agent's place to correct such a mistake, and, in the fullness of time, the woman will inherit NFA items from a complete stranger.

Some businesses that sell NFA items also provide gun trusts. If it's drafted by an attorney familiar with the buyer's state, it may be perfectly valid. Having an attorney who is familiar with gun trusts review the document will never hurt.

RESTRICTIONS STILL APPLY

A trust does not absolve the responsible person from restrictions on moving NFA items across state lines. Before transporting an NFA item across state lines, a responsible person must verify whether that specific type of firearm or other accessory is legal to possess in that state. In addition, ATF approval must be obtained before moving the item.

Nationwide concealed carry does not yet exist and, given the current composition of Congress, that day may still be years away. States are very touchy about their firearms laws. Some ban all manner of NFA items, while others prohibit only certain types. Local authorities may also have their own biases.

One case in California highlights the risks. A man whose job required him to demonstrate machine guns to police agencies was attacked. The only available firearm with which to defend himself was the demonstration machine gun. He used it in a textbook case of self-defense but was still prosecuted. Prosecutors argued, "He used a machine gun! There must be something wrong with that!" Though he was ultimately acquitted, he incurred thousands of dollars in attorney fees, and his employer fired him.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEIRS

A trust cannot protect anyone from the prejudices of small-minded authorities, but it can ensure the settlor's intentions are carried out and safeguard heirs from unnecessary complications and expenses. If gun owners value their heirs enough to bequeath them firearms, they should do them the favor of establishing quality wills or trusts.

Kevin L. Jamison is an attorney in the Kansas City, Missouri, area concentrating in the area of weapons and self-defense. Please send questions by physical mail to Kevin L. Jamison 2614 NE 56th Terrace, Gladstone, Missouri, 64119-2311 or by email at KLJamisonLaw@earthlink.net. Individual answers are not usually possible but may be addressed in future columns. This information is for legal information purposes and does not constitute legal advice. For specific questions, you should consult a qualified attorney.

ENDNOTES

(1) *I do not write wills, but these cases are staples of law school classes.* **(2)** *The various cases indicate that there are no new legal problems; only the technology changes. Kathleen Freeman,* The Murder of Herodes *(New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963).* **(3)** *They usually include machine guns, short-barreled rifles, and shotguns and suppressors.* **(4)** *I know: Social Security numbers are not supposed to be used for identification. As a practical matter, we are beyond that.*

CCi

WALK SOFTLY
WITHOUT THE BIG STICK

NEW

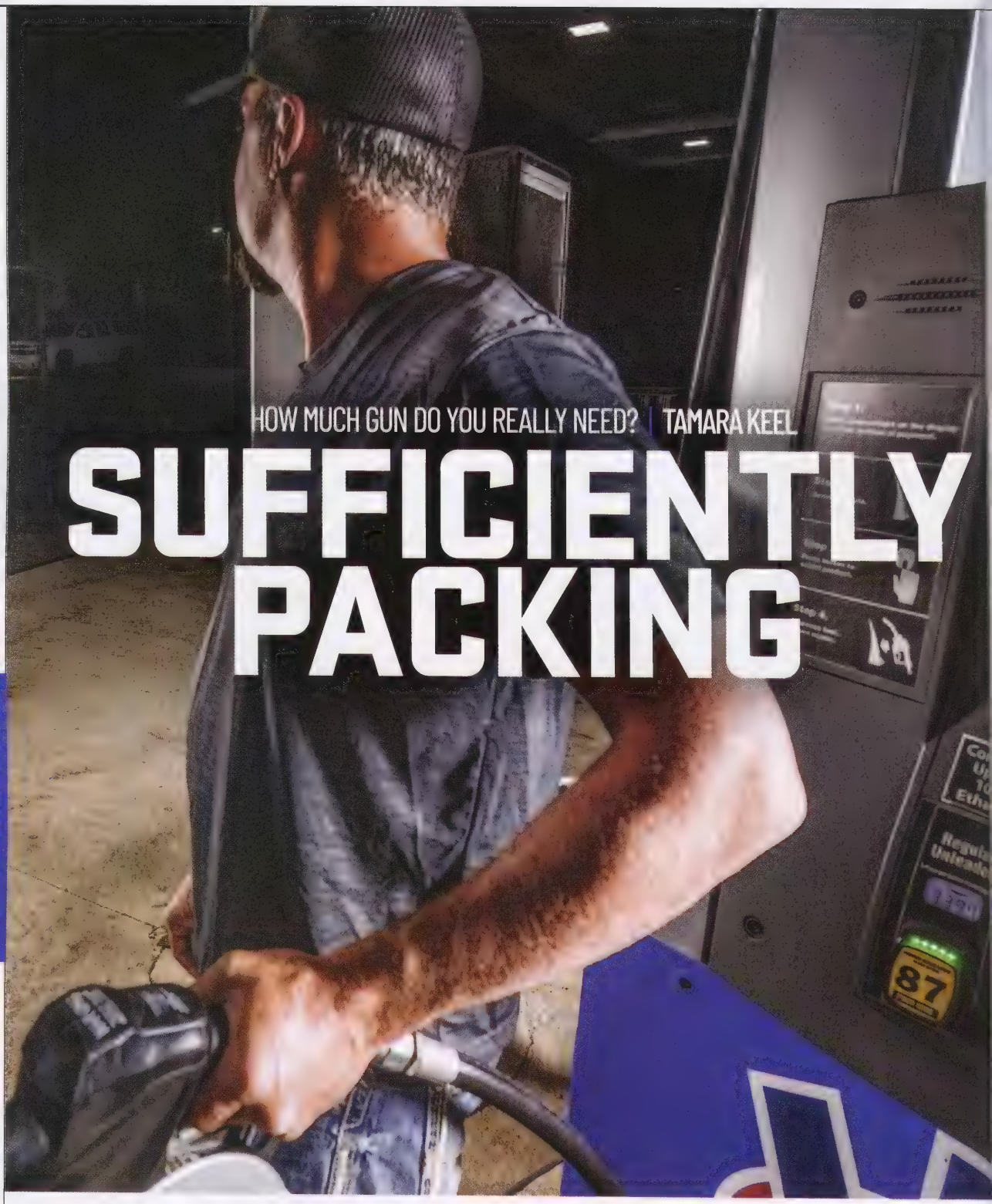
INTRODUCING
UPPERCUT

Defense isn't defined by size. And whatever you carry should be up to the task. CCI® Uppercut™ finally puts effective rimfire defense in your reach with full expansion and critical penetration. Always ready when you need it, and now available in 22 LR and 22 WMR.

LEARN MORE AT
cci-ammunition.com

THE LEADER IN RIMFIRE AMMUNITION®

© 2025 CCI Ammunition



HOW MUCH GUN DO YOU REALLY NEED? | TAMARA KEEL

SUFFICIENTLY PACKING

No fight is a good fight. That's actually a nice double entendre because avoiding a fight in the first place is the best possible outcome. After all, you can't lose a fight you're not in. Ideally, living your life in what Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper called "Condition Yellow" — staying aware of your surroundings and recognizing pre-attack cues — should help you avoid situations in which you'd need to draw your carry gun.

Of course, life is not made up of ideal circumstances, and the very reason I carry a handgun in the first place is because my situational awareness is not perfect or omniscient. If I have to employ a handgun, it means I've failed to recognize the looming cues and am now forced to make the best of a bad situation. So, how do you prepare for this eventuality from a practical standpoint?

I mean, if you really knew you were headed for a

TAKE A CAREFUL LOOK AT YOUR DAILY LIFE. WHERE DO YOU GO, AND WHEN DO YOU GO THERE?

fight, you'd want to bring a long gun — and probably three or four friends with long guns. But doing bounding overwatch through the produce department at Kroger would look a little out of place, and managing a shopping cart while carrying an M4 carbine at the same time isn't exactly practical.

The entire raison d'être of the handgun is that it's unobtrusive and doesn't get in your way. It's the firearm you carry when you aren't expecting trouble but are aware that trouble might arise anyway. And this, in turn, raises the question of bringing "enough gun."

OVERKILL IS A REAL THING

Some people insist that unless you have a full-sized pistol, two spare magazines, a backup handgun with a reload, both a fixed-blade and a folding knife, an impact weapon, and a chemical spray, you just aren't taking this seriously.

If you've found a way to carry all of that gear comfortably all day, every day — without facing personal or professional repercussions for doing so — hey, great. It's certainly optimal, and you're prepared for just about anything — at least from a gear standpoint. (We'll assume you're well-trained and have recently practiced deploying and using all of that gear. This is a hardware-oriented column after all.)

But where do you live, and what are you doing that makes all of that gear necessary? That's the kind of loadout carried by law enforcement officers who seek out and confront criminals for a living. If, like me, you're not a cop, your primary goal is simply to get to and from the office, grocery store or movie theater without becoming a victim.

ASSESS AND ANALYZE

This is the point at which a personal risk assessment — including a realistic analysis of personal restrictions and permissions — should guide your choice of a personal-protection firearm, not what was on the cover of the gun magazine at the newsstand or what the hero carried in the last Hollywood shoot-'em-up you watched.

For example, if you work someplace where job requirements dictate how you dress and there might be work-related blowback if someone notices you carrying, certain firearms may be less practical. A full-sized, long-slide Glock 34 might be a no-go if your workplace attire consists of surgical scrubs or if you're shorter than average and must wear a tucked-in polo shirt.

If you work in an office park, live in the 'burbs and don't frequent crowded entertainment districts after dark, you're unlikely to find yourself in a running gun battle with a squad of criminals. Your primary exposure to violent crime will most likely occur at one of those most notorious watering holes on the Savanna of crime: a gas station, an ATM or a Walmart parking lot. In such a circumstance, you're most likely concerned about what criminologists call a "resource predator" — someone who's after your wallet (i.e., someone who's more interested in money than a gunfight).

This is where a small pistol or snubby revolver that's kept readily and unobtrusively accessible, such as in a pocket, is far more useful than a full-sized semi-auto that's locked in the car or left at home because you couldn't find a way to carry it without violating the office dress code. This is also what trainer Darryl Bolke refers to as the "snubby lifestyle," and it comes with the added benefit of serving as a reminder that your little pistol is enough gun to get you out of trouble — not to go looking for it. I'm a fan of this approach since looking for trouble isn't my job.

WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED MORE GUN

If you spend time in crowded environments, are often out after dark or need to transport money for work, these factors raise your potential threat level and warrant considering a way to carry more gun. A concealment setup that allows for carrying a larger handgun under regular street attire, such as the Enigma from PHLster, can be a boon here. While your best bet is still awareness and avoidance, doing cash drops as part of your job brings with it an increased likelihood of facing multiple assailants.

After dark and in entertainment districts, you're more likely to encounter a "process predator" — someone who not only is after a wallet but also is actively seeking a victim, possibly you specifically. This is the type of situation in which a criminal is less likely to desist and retreat at the first gunshot, making the value of a pistol with more rounds in the magazine outweigh the potential hassle of carrying it.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES ARE CHEAPER AND EASIER

Take a careful look at your daily life. Where do you go, and when do you go there? Simple lifestyle changes are sometimes cheaper and easier than hardware upgrades. If you can avoid gas stops after nightfall, shop at big-box stores during daylight hours on weekends and use ATMs only in high-visibility locations with good lines of sight, you'll eliminate the vast majority of victimization opportunities in a typical suburban lifestyle. Because once you've eliminated as many criminal opportunities as possible and learned what to look for and avoid in your daily routine, your only concern is ensuring you have enough gun for the fight you couldn't avoid.

SOURCES

PHLster: PHLsterHolsters.com

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON BRAUNCOWSKI

FLORIDA HOME INTRUDERS ANSWER THE WRONG CALL | ANTHONY L. DEWITT

THE SIREN'S SONG

The River Club area in Manatee County, Florida, is like many upscale golf communities in the region, meaning planned developments offering country-club living. This lifestyle is the fruit of hard work. The area features numerous homes on circles, with streets boasting houses valued at $500,000 and above. For many homeowners, it represents the fulfillment of the American dream: a big house filled with love and laughter, a safe community with good neighbors, and a perfectly manicured lawn.

For others with darker intentions, it represents the siren's song of easily acquired riches. And much like the sirens of Greek mythology, this intoxicating call lured a pair of armed felons to destruction.

EVENING INTRUSION

On the night of Dec. 26, 2024, two perpetrators targeted an occupied home on Hickory Hammock Circle near Sarasota, Florida. One of the intruders was wanted and subject to deportation. The other had been arrested in 2023 and had served jail time for burglary. For reasons unclear, he was released on parole in November 2024. Less than a month later, he had an active warrant for parole violations and was considered armed and dangerous. Both suspects were armed, and both, at a minimum, had burglary on their minds.

At around 9 p.m., the intruders donned black ski masks and crept down the side of the home toward the rear, searching for an entry point. Unbeknownst to the men, the homeowners' outdoor cameras had already alerted the residents to their presence. One homeowner immediately armed himself, informed his wife of the situation and sent her to the front part of the house, hoping she would be safe there.

The homeowner then waited to see if the pair was brazen enough to break into an obviously occupied dwelling. Prying up windows in a ground-floor office, the first intruder climbed through — only to be immediately confronted by the armed homeowner. Meanwhile, the second man attempted to follow through the same entry point.

Before the first intruder could draw his own weapon and fire, the homeowner shot him three times. Seeing this, the second intruder made a choice that saved his life: He fled out the same window and ran.

He was later arrested after a police canine tracked him down and found him hiding about four blocks away from the house. He now faces felony murder charges in Manatee County.

CALLING FOR HELP

Immediately after the shooting, the homeowner called 911, reported the shots fired and briefly explained the situation to the dispatcher.

Deputies were dispatched and found the home invader lying in the office with three gunshot wounds to his torso. He was seriously injured but still breathing. The deputies administered first aid until paramedics arrived and transported him to Sarasota Memorial Hospital in critical condition. The next morning, he succumbed to his wounds.

A JUSTIFIED SHOOTING

Florida's stand-your-ground statute (776.012) was adopted by the Florida Legislature in 2005 and signed into law by Gov. Jeb Bush. It permits an individual to use deadly force if he or she reasonably believes such force is necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily injury to either himself or herself or another person.

There are special provisions for defending a dwelling, residence or vehicle, as explained below. The law also permits the use of deadly force to prevent the imminent commission of a forcible felony. In addition, it applies two rebuttable presumptions in a criminal case.

First, a person is presumed to have a reasonable fear that deadly force is necessary to protect the resident of an occupied structure or someone else residing there if an individual unlawfully enters the property. Second, a person who unlawfully or forcibly enters another's dwelling is presumed to have criminal intent to commit an unlawful act involving violence or the threat of violence.

Sheriff Rick Wells of Manatee County had no criticism of the defender in this case but had harsh words for the perpetrators. At a press conference posted on X, Wells cut straight to the point:

> [T]he bottom line is this is the state of Florida. You want to break into someone's home, you should expect to be shot. And this was an occupied home at 9 o'clock at night, this husband and wife were sitting there enjoying their evening just like all of us were, hopefully, and they hear this commotion going on, they see these suspects that are masked up trying to break into the home ... and then the homeowner defended himself and his wife.[1]

DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT

The homeowner obviously had a plan to handle such a situation. He installed cameras outside to provide a warning if someone was lurking around his home. He also locked his doors and windows, forcing the intruders to make noise by prying open a window to gain entry.

Prioritizing his wife's safety, the homeowner informed her of the situation and sent her to the front of the house, away from where he expected the intruders to enter. He exercised tactical patience, refraining from firing until the first man was inside the residence and posed a clear, imminent deadly threat. He fired three times and then stopped. He did not shoot at the man fleeing through the window.

After the incident, he made a timely call to 911, relayed the facts to the dispatcher and cooperated fully with the deputies upon their arrival. He also provided a detailed description of the second suspect, enabling a swift area search and a quick arrest of the accomplice.

The homeowner's actions impressed the sheriff enough to elicit public praise, and no charges have been filed against the homeowner in this case.

ENDNOTES

(1) *X.com/i/web/status/1872832713847083218.*

METRO DEFENSE

AVOID, EVADE AND PREPARE FOR VIOLENCE

CHIP EBERHART

Navigating personal safety in today's metropolitan areas presents unique challenges. High population densities, diverse demographics and complex sociopolitical dynamics can contribute to increased criminal activity, random violence and unpredictable situations. In addition, urban environments often feature tight spaces, such as subways, crowded streets and busy restaurants, while restrictive gun laws can further complicate self-defense options.

While a concealed weapon serves as a last-resort option, a mindset focused on avoidance and evasion should always take priority. Understanding these principles is crucial not only for personal safety but also for upholding the legal and ethical responsibilities of firearms ownership and concealed carry.

AVOID

Avoidance requires proactive measures to help you steer clear of potentially dangerous situations. Modern technology, including smartphone apps that provide real-time crime data, GPS tracking and emergency alerts, can enhance personal safety.

Crime statistics and patterns show that certain neighborhoods and times of day carry higher risks. By making informed decisions about where and when to travel and planning your routes and destinations accordingly, you can minimize exposure to high-crime areas. Opting for well-lit streets, avoiding alleys and staying away from areas known for frequent disturbances can significantly reduce your likelihood of encountering violence. If you're going somewhere you think you'll need a gun, strongly consider not going there.

IN A HEATED PUBLIC DISPUTE, A SIMPLE APOLOGY, EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT AT FAULT, CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WALKING AWAY SAFELY AND HAVING TO ENGAGE IN A VIOLENT ENCOUNTER. IT'S GOOD TO BE RIGHT, BUT IT'S BETTER TO GET HOME WITHOUT INCIDENT.

Maintaining confident body language, such as standing upright, making eye contact and walking purposefully, can help you deter potential attackers. Similarly, being mindful of how you dress and what you carry can minimize the appearance of vulnerability. Wearing flashy jewelry, using expensive gadgets or even walking with headphones in both ears can make you an attractive target. Criminals tend to seek out those who appear distracted or unaware.

Alcohol is a major risk factor in violent encounters. Bars, clubs and similar venues are often hot spots for fights and disputes, and carrying a firearm in establishments serving alcohol is illegal in many jurisdictions. Plus, bars are full of egos, and mixing egos with a few adult beverages is a recipe for violence.

EVADE

This is where situational awareness becomes essential. Often described as the "cornerstone" of personal safety, situational awareness involves being conscious of your surroundings and recognizing potential threats before they escalate.

A useful framework for evasion is the OODA loop (Observe, Orient, Decide and Act), developed by United States Air Force Col. John Boyd. This decision-making model is invaluable. Observing your surroundings, orienting yourself to potential threats, deciding on a course of action and acting swiftly can prevent a dangerous situation from spiraling out of control.

Maintaining your cool is another critical skill. Responding with calmness and clarity rather than aggression can defuse a tense situation and prevent it from escalating. For instance, the next time someone cuts you off, offer a polite wave. In the back of your mind, you can think whatever you want — but keep it to yourself. In a heated public dispute, a simple apology, even when you're not at fault, can mean the difference between walking away safely and having to engage in a violent encounter. It's good to be right, but it's better to get home without incident.

PREPARE

Preparation does not mean anticipating violence at every turn but rather being mentally, legally and physically ready to respond if no other option exists.

The presence of a weapon does not grant you a license to engage in reckless behavior or to escalate conflicts. Instead, it places an even greater burden on you to act responsibly and an obligation to exhaust every possible avenue to avoid violence before resorting to force.

Violent encounters are as much psychological as they are physical. Mental preparation involves understanding the gravity of using lethal force and being ready to face the aftermath — emotionally and legally. Visualization techniques and stress-inoculation training can help you maintain composure under extreme pressure.

Understanding the self-defense laws in your jurisdiction is equally critical. Stand-your-ground laws, duty-to-retreat statutes and the legal definition of "imminent threat" vary widely between states. Knowing these details ensures that any defensive action you take is lawful and justifiable.

And while we're talking about preparation, firearms ownership alone is not enough; proficiency matters. Regular training helps you maintain accuracy and control under stress, while scenario-based drills help you develop responses to dynamic threats, such as mass-casualty or close-quarters attacks. Simulations, force-on-force training and decision-making drills can replicate the high-stress environment of a real-life encounter. Fortunately, USCCA Members have access to valuable online training resources, and in-person instruction is available through USCCA Certified Instructors across the country.

However, in some self-defense situations, using a firearm is impractical or unsafe. If an attacker grabs you in a confined space, basic hand-to-hand skills, such as striking, grappling and escaping holds, can be invaluable. Physical fitness also improves your endurance, strength and composure under pressure. Check with your local martial arts facility. Many offer or can arrange basic training.

Personal alarms, pepper spray and other less-lethal tools provide additional layers of defense or can serve as alternatives to a firearm. However, these tools should complement, not replace, the principles of avoidance, evasion and preparation. Pepper spray isn't gunfire, but it's still a use of force, and it's better to avoid uses of force when you can.

PRIORITIZE THESE PRINCIPLES

In metropolitan areas — where the potential for violence is heightened — avoidance, evasion and preparation must remain at the forefront of your self-defense strategy. By prioritizing these principles, you can confidently navigate urban environments while minimizing risk and ensuring that you're ready to act if necessary.

MOOSE, FERAL HOGS, SNAKES AND 'GATORS

SELF-DEFENSE AGAINST ANIMALS, PART 4

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is Part 4 of a four-part series that delves into aggressive-animal encounters. While such occurrences are relatively uncommon, preparing for one is a crucial aspect of a prepared defender's self-defense and family-defense mindset — especially for someone who lives in an area with populations of potentially dangerous animals or who ventures into remote wilderness areas for recreation. This article covers a variety of animals that weren't addressed in the first three parts of the series.*

Of course, it's not just canines, bears and mountain lions that can ruin your day if you're unprepared. Other threats include moose, feral hogs, snakes (both venomous and constrictors), alligators and rabid wild animals.

While the number of annual deaths caused by this diverse group may be small, it's always worthwhile to know the facts and take basic precautions.

MOOSE

Moose are proof that an animal need not be carnivorous to pose a threat to man. *Alces alces* are the largest members of the deer family; a full-grown bull in the Lower 48 can weigh more than 1,000 pounds. And an enraged moose can easily run a man down and stomp him — possibly to death.

There are approximately 300,000 moose in 19 states.[1] Though Alaska has the most moose, Maine has the largest population of moose in the contiguous United States. That's where Jonathan Nathaniel Hayes and his 17-year-old son Caleb were running sled dogs in Aroostook County in the spring of 2022 when a cow moose attacked their team and other dogs kenneled on their property.[2]

The younger Hayes was forced to run to a neighbor, who lent him a Savage .30-06. Two shots from the rifle incapacitated the moose. A Maine game warden called to the scene dispatched it with three additional shots.

Longtime Alaska hunting guide Jason Lesmeister is fond of saying that, come summer, you have a better chance of getting stomped by a cow moose with a calf than you do getting mauled by a bear. He's come close — twice — himself. Once he was helping two Native children retrieve their property after they had been chased off by a cow they had managed to anger.

"The old cows, they're pushing 1,000 pounds," Lesmeister said. "I can feel the ground shaking, you know. It's wild. So I just went to one side of [a] tree, and she went to the other. And she actually hit the tree."

Another time, Lesmeister was walking his dog when a cow blew past him out of nowhere, unleashing a mule kick as it went. That hoof came pretty close to striking him. And then out of the bush came her calf.

"And so it was just one of those deals — wrong place, wrong time," he indicated. "Luckily, I had a Labrador that knew better than to chase any animal. He'd just sit down and bark."

Lesmeister said that apart from startling a cow with a calf, the other time you're most likely to be injured by a moose is if you're hunting them and you shoot one without killing or incapacitating it. In both scenarios, he recommends situational awareness as a preventative measure.

When he's out in the bush, Lesmeister carries a Smith & Wesson Alaska Backpacker II chambered in .44 Magnum. He carries his revolver in a chest holster or on his hip, depending on what he's doing. And he prefers 300-grain cast bullets. He said that any self-defense scenario that involves shooting a moose would likely take place with him on the ground and the animal directly above.

"[I]f the moose is on top of me, hopefully I'm just shooting it under the chin. And I'm going right up through the top of the skull," he said. "That's instant death."

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources states that physical warning signs that a moose may become aggressive include lowering its head, raising the hair on its neck, licking its snout and pinning its ears back.[3] The division also provides the following safety tips to prevent human-moose conflict:

- Always give the moose a lot of space and watch its behavior.
- Never try to approach or feed a moose.
- Keep dogs leashed and under control at all times.
- Stay calm and do not run away. Talk, make your presence known, and slowly back away in the direction from which you came.
- If a moose charges you or chases you, hide behind something solid (such as a tree) or try to get inside a vehicle or building.
- If a moose knocks you down, curl into a ball, protect your head and lie still until the moose retreats.

"Like with most wildlife, if you give moose plenty of space and don't try to get too close, it will help keep you and them safe," Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Wildlife Section Chief Covy Jones indicated.

FERAL HOGS

Wild pigs aren't native to the United States. They are a legacy of Spanish conquistadors, including Hernando de Soto, who introduced swine to the Southeast in the 16th century. Escapees from that herd and others quickly established themselves and eventually mixed their genetics with Eurasian wild boars brought to the states for hunting purposes in the 1890s and 1930s.

And, voila, you have millions of razorbacks destroying delicate habitats, tearing up golf courses, damaging valuable crops, and occasionally threatening humans and pets. The annual damage is estimated to be in the billions.

As a species, *Sus scrofa* has the potential to reach very large body weights.[4] The average adult body weight of a feral hog is approximately 180 pounds. Males are slightly bigger — around 200 to 220 pounds — and females typically weigh between 150 and 170 pounds. (Exceptional specimens have been reported to exceed 500 pounds.) The growth in body weight for a feral hog continues until about the fifth year of life, after which it decreases with advancing age.

A male feral hog possesses a thickened subcutaneous layer of cartilaginous tissue, commonly referred to as the "shield," which overlies the outermost muscles in the boar's lateral shoulder region. This shield serves a protective function for a male hog fighting with other males. The shield initially develops with the onset of sexual maturity and can grow up to 2 inches thick in an adult. Feral hogs also have sharp tusks (larger in boars than sows) and can charge unexpectedly if they feel threatened.

They can be found as far north as Pennsylvania and New York and range as far west as California. But the epicenter of this infestation is in Texas, where an estimated 2.6 million feral hogs reside in the Lone Star State.

It was 50 miles east of Houston in the town of Anahuac, Texas, where the last known human fatality from a feral hog occurred in the United States. In November 2019, home health care worker Christine Rollins was found dead outside the residence of an elderly couple for whom she was caring.[5] She had multiple injuries to her body, and Chambers County Sheriff Brian Hawthorne later confirmed that she had died from severe blood loss due to a feral hog assault. He said there were signs of feral pigs on the property and that the animals were a problem in the area.

Feral hog expert John Mayer, of the Savannah River National Laboratory, said that in the U.S., on average, there has been one human fatality due to a wild pig attack every 20 years. (Globally, it's a different story, with 26 fatal wild pig attacks in 2024 alone — most occurring in India and China.) He said that men in their 50s have most often been attacked, while men in their 60s have most often been fatally attacked.

Retired U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services trapper Mike Bodenchuk has a healthy respect for feral hogs. He said that they're not as big as most people think but that the tusks on a male are so sharp that were you to grab one and run your hand down it, it would slice you like a knife blade. He said that feral hogs are smarter than dogs and generally want to avoid people but that all bets are off when they feel cornered or threatened.

One day, Bodenchuk was called in by the San Antonio Police Department to shoot a feral hog that was snoozing behind a suburban home, nestled where a wooden fence met a bush. Armed with a .308 rifle, he told the cops on the scene that he was going to shoot it head-on, down the length of its body, so that the bullet wouldn't come out.

"It should have been a simple thing," Bodenchuk said. "But while we were talking, a cat walk[ed] down the side of the house and enter[ed] the bush. That pig jumped up, [came] out of the bush, stopped, looked around, saw those two officers and came right at them."

The officers let loose with a hail of 9mm bullets from their duty weapons. But even 13 shots or so later — by Bodenchuk's estimation — the hog was down but still breathing. He dispatched it with a round of .357 Magnum.

"A 9mm is adequate for an average-sized pig," he indicated. "But it's by no means too much gun. Something like a .40 S&W or a .45 [ACP] would put you in a better stance if you have to kill a big pig. Because a big pig is pretty tough!"

SNAKES

A venomous snake you encounter in the wild or on your property will want nothing to do with you. From a biological perspective, it costs a lot of energy to produce venom. And a snake doesn't want to envenomate something it can't eat.

The danger comes when you're unaware of your surroundings or are otherwise getting too close for a snake's comfort. A snake that feels threatened might very well bite, and a venomous snake's striking range is more or less (depending on whom you consult) half the length of its body. There are about six venomous snake-bite deaths per annum in the United States.[6]

Venomous snakes can be identified in several ways. Most venomous snakes have a more angular head. Rattlesnakes have their distinctive rattles. And some can be recognized by their distinct coloration. (In the case of coral snakes, they have bright red, black and yellow bands.)

Large-carnivore biologist Mark Aughton thinks of venomous snakes as "biological landmines" and tries his best to know where he's stepping or reaching when he's out in the field — especially in his native Southwest Florida, where he used to work in Big Cypress National Preserve.

"Of all the things that I was always worried about working in the Everglades," he said, "I felt like venomous snakes were always my highest chance of having an incident."

He's personally stepped on two but luckily had on snake gaiters, which he said look like soccer shin guards but wrap around your whole calves and cover the tops of your feet. So gaiters and specially made snake-proof boots are his first recommendations for if you're working in an area thick with venomous snakes.

He also advises knowing where you're putting your hands or, if you're stepping over a log, trying to step on top of it and then jumping away; a venomous snake might be cozied up on the other side. And if you have a lot of distance to cover, it's a good idea to scan your surroundings.

"As I'm approaching a point," Aughton indicated, "I'm scanning the next 20 feet in basically a 3-foot-wide band. And anything that looks even a little bit out of the

ordinary, I'm not going to be just walking past it."

If you encounter a venomous snake, your best course of action will typically be to simply avoid it and go on your merry way. Venomous snakes help keep down the rodent population and serve as a vital part of the ecology.

However, one situation that might require you to shoot a venomous snake is if your pet has one cornered and doesn't realize the inherent danger. Chico State Professor Christine Carroll found herself in that exact scenario with her beloved calico cat "Grubby."

Upon going outside her Sierra Foothills home one day, she heard a buzzing sound that was continuous, almost like a disturbed hornet's nest. Looking down, she saw her calico hunched down a foot or two away from a rattlesnake — likely a northern Pacific rattlesnake — that was coiled up in some leaf litter.

It was a standoff of sorts, and Carroll didn't know what to do. Her .357 Magnum revolver was inside the house, but she worried about hitting Grubby. After some deliberation, she grabbed a long stick and managed to swat the cat away from the snake without it striking.

When he was presented with this scenario and asked what he would do, Buffalo Bore's Tim Sundles suggested birdshot shells in .45 ACP, .44 Special, .38 Special, .357 Magnum and 9mm.

"There is no danger of ricochet with those, and I have used them myself several times," he said. "The cartridges I have are all made by Speer, but other manufacturers probably make them."

And then there's the invasion of Burmese pythons in South Florida. The infestation of *Python bivittatus* likely started in the 1970s with people releasing their exotic pets into the wild. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed a python breeding center, which saw hundreds more of the Asian constrictors let loose. There is now an established breeding population that's giving wildlife officials fits.

To date, nobody in the United States has been killed by a free-ranging Burmese python. A handful of folks have been killed by captive pythons (including Burmese), and there is one reported killing of an infant by a Burmese python in its native range a century ago. That said, big constrictors should always be treated with respect. Handling one is, at minimum, a two-person job.

Should you find yourself improbably wrapped up by an invasive Burmese python in the wilds of Florida (a 19-foot specimen was captured in Collier County, so it's theoretically possible), there are a few tricks at your disposal to help you avoid losing that fight. For example, if you have someone with you, he or she can simply unwrap the snake, starting with the tail and working his or her way up.

Aughton said that if you're alone and can manage it, snapping the sensitive tip of the python's tail will likely cause it to release you from its smothering grasp. Pouring rubbing alcohol directly into its mouth can also cause it to think twice about squeezing you to death. (This last tip requires some forward thinking.)

There's also the question of whether it's legal to kill a snake, even if it's on your property. Both the eastern massasauga rattlesnake and the New Mexican ridge-nosed rattlesnake are federally protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Killing either one of these can result in a hefty fine and even prison time, so beware.[7]

Individual state laws vary, and some can be surprising. California, for example, is fairly lenient toward the killing of rattlesnakes. Anyone can kill a rattlesnake — with the exception of the endangered red diamond rattlesnake — at any time in the Golden State.

Georgia, however, is on the other end of the spectrum. It doesn't matter if a snake is venomous or nonvenomous. Possessing or killing one is a misdemeanor. And someone found in violation of the law can face a $1,000 fine and/or jail time.

Dispatch an invasive Burmese python in Florida? You're in the clear as long as the snake is on your own private property. You might even get a pat on the back from wildlife officials for doing your civic duty. There's even an annual Burmese python roundup for those who qualify and are so inclined.[8] As Attorney Tom Grieve is wont to say, "Check your local listings."

GATORS

No, American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) can't run as fast as a galloping horse. And they're not even built to chase prey on land, so there's no need to evade them in a zigzag pattern. That said, they are almost perfectly evolved predators that have inhabited their current form for millions of years. And they're fully capable of killing a human if they're not treated with due respect.

According to Aughton, there's about seven attacks per year on average in Florida, which is second only to Louisiana in terms of wild alligators. Though lower in numbers outside of these two states, alligators range from Texas in the west to the Carolinas in the north. The majority of attacks aren't fatal, and most of the time they're successfully fended off.

People tend to exaggerate the size of alligators, Aughton said. A large adult male is likely to come in around 12 feet in length and weigh about 500 pounds, with females being notably smaller. They're generalists, feeding mainly on fish, seasoned with the occasional small mammal. A large specimen can even take a deer.

They're cold-blooded and feed mainly at night but spend their days alternating between basking in the sun and slipping back into the water to regulate their temperature. Alligators have complex four-chambered hearts and can hold their breath well in excess of an hour.

An interesting thing about crocodilians (the order of reptiles to which alligators belong) is that their bite force is the highest in the animal kingdom. And only larger species of crocodilians have a more powerful bite than an American alligator (nearly 3,000 pounds of pressure per square inch). So there's little chance of prying a gator's jaws apart.

You'll find them in every bit of fresh water anywhere in their range, Aughton stated. Especially in Florida or Louisiana, if you have a puddle that's big enough to contain an alligator, there's probably going to be an alligator in there.

They were originally federally protected back in the 1970s, but they've grown in number and, these days — in Florida and other states within their range — you can get a hunting permit for them. They are also regularly trapped.

Ways to keep safe in alligator country include not swimming in deep (over your head) fresh water anywhere within

their range. An alligator kills by clamping down on you and taking you down to the depths to drown. People in gator country seem to know this, however.

"You'd struggle to find a person in Florida who was really pumped up about swimming in a lake or river," Aughton said.

Don't walk your dogs along a riverbank or lake's edge, otherwise known as the "strike zone." The American alligator is an ambush predator, and one might spy you from a distance, slowly move in, shoot out from the water, and grab you or your pet.

And if you do find yourself in the jaws of a gator? Depending on what you have on your person, you might have to get creative.

"Ideally, you wouldn't find yourself empty-handed," Aughton stated. "[An] alligator [is] essentially covered in armor. [Its] head is like a wrecking ball. You need to get it in a vulnerable area. And in that situation, I would prefer to have a knife."

Vulnerable areas include the throat and eyes. Some people who have been bitten have managed to push down that flap found in the back of the throat of every crocodilian that keeps the water out of its lungs and stomach. When the water floods in, the predator releases its grip.

"So, essentially, your only game in town is to try to inflict egregious injury on it before you're pulled into deep water," he explained. "Because if you can convince it that, whoa, this is too much trouble, then you've got a pretty good chance."

Another important tip is to not camp within sight of water in alligator territory or the territory of any crocodilian large enough to take a man.

"They'll watch you go in and out of your tent for a few days," Aughton stated. "And then maybe on the third or fourth day they'll realize you're not leaving there all night and come pay you a visit."

Odds are you could camp by the water in gator country your whole life and never pay the price. But why risk it?

RABIES

Finally, there are rabid wild animals. As we learned earlier in this series from Texas State researcher Rodney Rohde — one of the foremost rabies experts in the United States — any warm-blooded animal, particularly a mammal, can acquire the disease (January 2025 issue, Page 48).

Some animals are more likely to transmit rabies than others, Rohde said. In Texas, for example, animals defined as being at high risk for transmitting rabies include skunks, bats, foxes, coyotes and raccoons. Low-risk animals for transmission include rabbits, opossums and armadillos as well as mice, rats, squirrels, nutria, shrews, prairie dogs, beavers, gophers and other rodents.

"Outdoorsmen are more likely to encounter wildlife which may be rabid," Rohde stated. "And they should understand that while movies like *Cujo*, *Old Yeller* and even *I Am Legend* may show animals as furious and foaming at the mouth, they may not appear like that at all. The most typical signs of rabies are unexplained paralysis and a change in behavior."

There are other clinical signs that a rabid animal may or may not exhibit, Rohde indicated, such as not eating, consuming strange objects, pawing at the mouth, appearing to be choking, having difficulty swallowing, chewing at the site of the bite, having seizures, and exhibiting hypersensitivities to touch or sound, to name a few.

If you are a hunter, trapper, angler or other individual who is routinely outdoors, he said, there are some simple tips you can follow to avoid being bitten and potentially exposed to rabies, such as:

- Avoid approaching strange animals.
- Do not handle downed bats. Downed, sick or strange-acting bats are the biggest culprit when it comes to human rabies cases/deaths in the United States over the past several decades.

DEATHS VS. CASUALTIES

■ I once observed a Vietnam War combat veteran get teary-eyed watching a presentation on modern battlefield medicine. The reason for his tears was twofold: Many of the wounds from which he watched his brothers in arms expire would be survivable today, but the result is, as he put it, "more American kids coming home minus arms and legs." And this brings us to the concept of a "casualty."

In the context of warfare, a casualty is a soldier who has been injured or killed. This is how some legendary military units had casualty rates of more than 100 percent. Military Assistance Command Vietnam - Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG) had a casualty rate of more than 100 percent because everyone who served in MACV-SOG was either wounded at least once or killed. "Casualty" does not mean death; it means dead or injured.

And when we talk about how many people are killed every year by animals in the United States, we have to understand the difference between killed and attacked.

No, dogs and bears and other kinds of potentially vicious critters don't kill all that many humans per year. But they sure do mangle, scalp and otherwise disfigure I-don't-know-how-many humans per year. Very few Americans die from venomous snake bites in an average year, but depending on how quickly you can get a bite victim to a hospital — and depending on his or her constitution and the amount of venom with which he or she was injected — that victim could be facing anything from nerve damage to limb loss. (Eastern diamondback rattlesnake bites can be particularly nasty in this department.)

I'm not trying to make you paranoid, but you need to understand that though animal-inflicted deaths are very low, animal-inflicted casualties remain substantial. And your concealed firearm is one of the tools that you may be called upon to use to prevent a loved one or other fellow human from incurring great bodily harm at the paws, claws, tusks or fangs of a dangerous animal.

— Ed Combs, Senior Editor

byrna LESS-LETHAL

FOR THE GUN OWNER WHO ALSO NEEDS A LESS-LETHAL OPTION.

THE USCCA RECOMMENDS BYRNA.

Scan to see how Byrna Launchers work.

- NOT CLASSIFIED AS A FIREARM
- LEGAL IN ALL 50 STATES
- NO BACKGROUND CHECKS
- NO PERMITS REQUIRED
- OVER 25,000 4.5 STAR REVIEWS
- OVER 500,000 UNITS SOLD

byrna LESS-LETHAL
THE ALTERNATIVE TO DEADLY FORCE
OFFICIAL PARTNER USCCA
PROUDLY AMERICAN
ASSEMBLED IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

VISIT BYRNA.COM/USCCA TO RECEIVE 15% OFF CUSTOM-CURATED BUNDLES!

• Report any bites to the proper official: the local rabies-control authority, animal control officer, game warden or local health department employee, for example. For children, a teacher or parent is a good reporting resource.

• Do not feed wildlife.

• Do not handle sick, injured or dead animals.

"If you've been bitten or scratched," Rohde advised, "or if you're unsure about whether you had any contact, consult a health care provider about whether you need treatment to prevent rabies. The treatment is called 'post-exposure prophylaxis,' and it's highly effective if it's given as soon as possible after exposure."

The rule of thumb, he said, is that if you get vaccinated before symptoms show up, then you can be protected via circulating antibodies.

Sundles said he's run into a few rabid animals during his life as an outdoorsman. Never one to mince words, he gave the following advice: "If you see a skunk, raccoon, fox, coyote, et cetera that is wandering around in plain sight in the daylight, there is something wrong with them, as they are generally nocturnal and very afraid of people. If they do not act afraid, chances are very good that they are rabid. When you see this, stay the crap away from them."

PRACTICAL WILDLIFE PRECAUTIONS

Much to the chagrin of economists and insurance adjusters, humans aren't automatons that perfectly assess risk. While the thought of a bloodthirsty black bear might keep you awake all night, shivering in your tent, the odds of being killed by one in the United States are in the hundreds of millions to one. And yet Americans happily munch on seed-oil soaked processed foods even though heart disease accounted for nearly one out of every five deaths in 2022.[9]

Of all the animals discussed in this series, the domestic dog causes the most human deaths in the United States each year. Even so, that number averages less than 50 in a country that's well on its way to reaching 400 million people.

So the possibility of being mauled to death by a pack of urban coyotes or chewed on by a mountain lion shouldn't keep you from your morning jog around the block or that long-awaited bow hunting trip in Utah. That said, there are some basic precautions you can take to avoid becoming that literal one-in-a-million statistic. Hopefully, through this series, you've learned a few.

ENDNOTES

(1) *These 19 states include Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.* **(2)** *Jessica Potila, "Rampaging moose shot after attacking 17-year-old's sled dog team,"* Bangor Daily News, *March 2, 2022, BangorDailyNews.com/2022/03/02/aroostook/17-year-old-can-am-musher-shoots-moose-on-rampage-against-his-sled-dog-team.* **(3)** *Faith Heaton Jolley, "How to stay safe if you encounter a moose," Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, June 6, 2022, Wildlife.Utah.gov/news/utah-wildlife-news/1448-how-to-stay-safe-if-you-encounter-a-moose.html.* **(4)** *"Physical Characteristics of Feral Hogs," Extension Foundation, Aug. 28, 2019, FeralHogs.Extension.org/physical-characteristics-of-feral-hogs.* **(5)** *Mark Osborne, "Texas woman killed by wild hogs in front yard of home: Sheriff," ABC News, Nov. 25, 2019, ABCNews.Go.com/US/texas-woman-killed-wild-hogs-front-yard-home/story?id=67308386.* **(6)** *"Frequently Asked Questions About Venomous Snakes," University of Florida Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, last updated Jan. 13, 2020, UFWildlife.IFAS.UFL.edu/venomous_snake_faqs.shtml.* **(7)** *"The States Where It's Illegal to Kill Snakes," DSC Northeast, Aug. 3, 2023, DSCNortheast.org/the-states-where-its-illegal-to-kill-snakes.* **(8)** *See FLPythonChallenge.org.* **(9)** *"Heart Disease Facts," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oct. 24, 2024, CDC.gov/heart-disease/data-research/facts-stats/index.html.*

ALLIGATOR ATTTACKS

■ In May 2012, two Fort Worth fishermen killed a large alligator they encountered while they were fishing along the Trinity River near the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. At some point in the incident, fearing for their lives, one of them shot the gator. The shooter was cited by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for illegal hunting and fined $5,300.[1]

• In June 2016, a Sumter County, Florida, man shot an alligator that was in his pasture bothering his horses. Believing the alligator was dead, the man's stepson walked toward it, but the reptile lunged and bit him in the thigh. Another man pulled the stepson away from the gator, and the shooter was arrested for unlawfully killing the animal.[2]

• In June 2018, a 15-year-old girl was floating on a raft in a creek in the Ocala National Forest, north of Orlando, when an approaching alligator forced her to climb a tree. When a sheriff's deputy arrived on the scene, the girl told him she was getting tired of holding on to her perch. The alligator did not retreat, so the deputy dispatched it with one shot from his Bushmaster AR-15.[3]

— Dorsey Kindler

ENDNOTES

(1) *"Fishermen: We Killed Alligator in Self-Defense," NBC 5 Dallas-Fort Worth, last updated May 26, 2012, NBCDFW.com/news/local/fishermen-we-killed-alligator-in-self-defense/1918245.* **(2)** *Heather Finn, "Florida Man Arrested for Killing an Alligator That Attacked His Stepson,"* Good Housekeeping, *Aug. 17, 2016, GoodHousekeeping.com/life/news/a39975/florida-man-arrested-for-killing-alligator.* **(3)** *Dean Weingarten, "Florida Girl Treed by Alligator, Saved by a Shot From an AR-15 Rifle,"* The Truth About Guns, *July 5, 2018, TheTruthAboutGuns.com/florida-girl-treed-by-alligator-saved-by-ar-15-rifle.*

PERFECTION MEETS TRUST

Everyday carry revolutionized by the AIMPOINT® COA™ – an all-new rugged red dot optic designed for slimline and standard pistol frames. Personal protection has a new standard of perfection in simplicity and trust.

1975-2025
50
Aimpoint
THE ORIGINAL RED DOT SIGHT

Performance from Trust®

014338

THINK IN COLOR

LIVING BY COOPER'S COLOR CODE

DICK FAIRBURN

I'm pretty sure the first time I heard the term "situational awareness" was when I was in the Army. It refers to being alert and aware of your surroundings at all times. Developing alertness skills is just as important for a private citizen exercising his or her concealed carry rights as it is for a soldier on night patrol behind enemy lines.

As a young police firearms trainer with infantry experience in my pocket, I felt I was adequately alert and aware but struggled to develop a way to teach those skills to new officers. By 1981, I had saved enough money to attend Gunsite Ranch, a relatively new training site at the time that was established by Jeff Cooper, a retired World War II and Korean War USMC lieutenant colonel. By that time, Cooper was reaching the pinnacle of his climb to the top of the small-arms training world.

The radical departure from normal firearms training at Gunsite went beyond mere marksmanship. Cooper's "shoot house" placed participants in three-dimensional live-fire scenarios that required smooth movement, extreme alertness and effective problem-solving. Students had to think on their feet.

Prior to our first run through the shoot house, we listened as Cooper presented a lecture on situational awareness based on four colors. Starting at the lowest alertness level (Condition White), he taught us how to smoothly increase our readiness for the use of deadly force (Condition Red). Moving through Cooper's Color Code became essential to success in the shoot house.

In 2006, the father of modern pistol training passed away at the age of 86. A whole generation of shooters today never had the chance to hear Cooper's teachings firsthand or read his writings when they were fresh and new. Like others who radically innovated in their fields of expertise, Cooper had his detractors, but his techniques are experiencing a resurgence.

The Color Code is a mental process, not a physical one, and should be applied whether you are armed or not (though being armed is always preferred). Staying alert and focused on potential threats around you helps prevent you from being caught off guard. By denying your adversary the element of surprise, you significantly increase your chances of prevailing in a gunfight.

WHITE

In Condition White, you are not alert or aware of any potential threats surrounding you, making you most susceptible to danger. Even police officers and soldiers sometimes fall into this state, which can lead to fatal consequences.

Ideally, you should be in Condition White only when you're asleep. However, many people lower their guards at home or in environments they assume to be safe. The reality is that no place is completely safe.

If you travel to dangerous areas, especially at high-risk times of the day or night (which is not recommended), consciously adopting a higher level of alertness than White is crucial for your safety. If you are attacked while you're in Condition White, only luck will determine whether you escape unharmed. I'm not a gambling man — at least not when it comes to my life — and I'd rather not leave my fate to chance.

YELLOW

Condition Yellow is a state of relaxed alertness. You are at ease but actively using your senses — sight, sound and peripheral vision — to scan your environment with 360-degree awareness. This doesn't mean you're paranoid or are experiencing irrational fear. Rather, you have heightened your level of attention to avoid being caught off guard (as you would be in Condition White).

You're not fixated on a specific person or area but remain aware that a threat could develop from any direction. Since humans have forward-facing eyes, the area behind you requires special attention. By watching reflections in windows and moving your head to utilize your peripheral vision, you can develop the habit of maintaining casual awareness in all directions.

You keep track of anyone walking behind you and position yourself strategically, such as choosing a seat with a clear view of entrances or minimizing the number of people behind you in a restaurant. However, this doesn't mean you must always sit in a "gunfighter seat" with your back to a corner. Instead, you're scanning and assessing your surroundings, identifying others in your immediate area, and mentally rehearsing "what if?" scenarios, considering how you would respond if a threat were to present itself.

If you're attacked, having mentally rehearsed your response allows you to default to an existing plan under stress rather than trying to formulate one on the fly — a situation that rarely ends well. If you carry a concealed firearm, you should remain in Condition Yellow (or higher) at all times.

ORANGE

Finding something in your environment that seems out of place or poses a potential threat — a person who appears to be following you, someone in a store who might be casing the place for a robbery or a stranger knocking at your door late at night — requires you to move to Condition Orange. Each of these situations demands an immediate upgrade in alertness.

In Condition Orange, your 360-degree scan shifts to a forward focus on a potential threat. You concentrate your attention on a particular individual, situation or object and remain fixated on it until you determine that it no longer poses a threat. This heightened focus occurs many times daily as you encounter unknown people in your routine.

If you detect a clear and immediate threat, you move to Condition Red. However, in most cases, individuals you observe will not pose a danger, though you should be prepared for if that changes. If someone gives you a reason for concern, you shift from general awareness to focused observation of that person. That said, overfocusing on one potential threat could leave you vulnerable to another from your periphery or behind you.

In Condition Orange, you anticipate the possibility of an attack and should position yourself accordingly, facing the potential threat. While it's impossible to train for every scenario, you can prepare for many situations you might encounter. In a moment of crisis, your brain will rely on muscle memory, drawing from scenarios you have rehearsed or visualized. That's why it's essential to catalog as many solutions as possible in your mind.

COOPER'S COLOR CODE NOT SO NOVEL

■ While Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper preached the effectiveness of the Color Code of Awareness for self-defense, the U.S. Army, the Red Cross, and even textile manufacturers and farmers used color codes during the 1940s and 1950s to alert individuals to danger and reduce accidents. In New England textile mills, some plants adopted yellow to warn against tripping or striking hazards, such as low beams. They used orange to signify alertness around pulleys, exposed gears and other danger points, and they utilized red for fire-protection equipment.

The American Standards Association War Committee codified a standardized system:

- **Red:** Fire equipment, danger and stop signs
- **Yellow:** Caution and physical hazards
- **Green:** Safety and first-aid equipment
- **White or Black:** Housekeeping or traffic markings

A war department study found that using this code at two Army depots reduced the yearly average of disabling injuries resulting from certain types of accidents from more than 46 percent to less than 6 percent.

The National Conference of Farm Safety adopted a similar code, adding two more colors: blue to designate electrical controls and caution areas and orange to identify dangerous parts of machines or equipment.

So, Cooper's system wasn't entirely novel after all. However, his application of a color code specifically to self-defense was. Next time you're in your workplace, see if you can spot any of these color designations used to represent different safety conditions. They're likely an iteration of the original color codes devised and adopted during World War II and the postwar years.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

EVEN AT THIS STAGE, AVOIDING THE FIGHT REMAINS THE BEST OPTION WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

RED

If you identify a threat, you shift to Condition Red. This means the individual is now a potential recipient of your force options. However, this does not mean you automatically use deadly force; it means you are fully prepared to use it if necessary. You draw your firearm only if the potential target's actions dictate that response. Some people misinterpret Condition Red as an automatic attack, but it should never be viewed as immediate engagement. Instead, it means you are prepared to engage only if the use of force is justified and remains a last resort.

Naturally, in this moment, your attention will be laser-focused on the attacker, a physiological reaction known as "tunnel vision." The challenge now is maintaining some level of 360-degree awareness, as focusing exclusively on one threat could make you vulnerable to others. The only way to counteract tunnel vision is through effective, high-stress training. An alert, well-trained spouse or companion can also significantly improve your odds in Condition Red by keeping watch for additional threats.

Even at this stage, avoiding the fight remains the best option whenever possible. If you can, back away and create distance rather than engage. Position yourself tactically by moving near a wall, an escape route or an object that provides solid cover if the attacker is armed.

IN PRACTICE

I got this real-life example of using Cooper's Color Code from a police officer who never carried a weapon while she was off duty. One day, she noticed a suspicious-looking young man exiting the passenger side of a car as she entered a grocery store. The car remained near the entrance, still running, with a second individual at the wheel.

As she shopped, she observed that the suspicious-looking man was now moving through the store, seemingly keeping a close watch on her. After paying for her groceries, she pushed her cart across the parking lot only to realize that he had worked his way behind her. Reacting swiftly, she abruptly spun her cart around, using it to block his movement, and verbally confronted him: "Can I help you?"

The man immediately turned on his heel and ran to the waiting car, and the vehicle sped away.

Even though she wasn't armed, my friend had used the Color Code masterfully and may have avoided a potentially deadly attack. She had been operating in Condition Yellow while she was shopping, immediately noticing the suspicious young man and his waiting partner. As she moved through the grocery store, she transitioned to Condition Orange, repeatedly observing the potential threat tracking her movements.

When the man positioned himself behind her in the parking lot, potentially preparing to strike, she shifted to Condition Red and confronted him directly. Like many street-level predators, he folded in the face of resistance. However, the situation could have taken a much different turn. Today, she supplements her natural situational awareness with a concealed sidearm, ensuring she's better prepared for a threat who might not back down.

SHARING THE CODE

When I first heard Cooper's Color Code lecture at Gunsite Ranch, I instantly recognized it as a simple yet powerful way to teach people how to develop their own habits of situational awareness. Like most great teaching techniques, the Color Code is easy to learn and remember.

Consciously using this system for a few weeks will quickly train your midbrain to become more alert. Humans can multitask, and by conditioning your midbrain to handle this simple, escalating process, your forebrain remains free to focus on other tasks. Yet when your midbrain detects a potential threat, your forebrain will take over — often without consciously realizing how it identified the danger.

Cooper's lecture that day was being videotaped, and I bought a copy of it on VHS. I used that tape in countless classes until I loaned it to another trainer, who later claimed he lost it. Without a backup copy, I began teaching the system in my own words. Since then, hundreds — perhaps thousands — of police recruits and concealed carriers have learned these techniques.

DON'T COMPLICATE THINGS

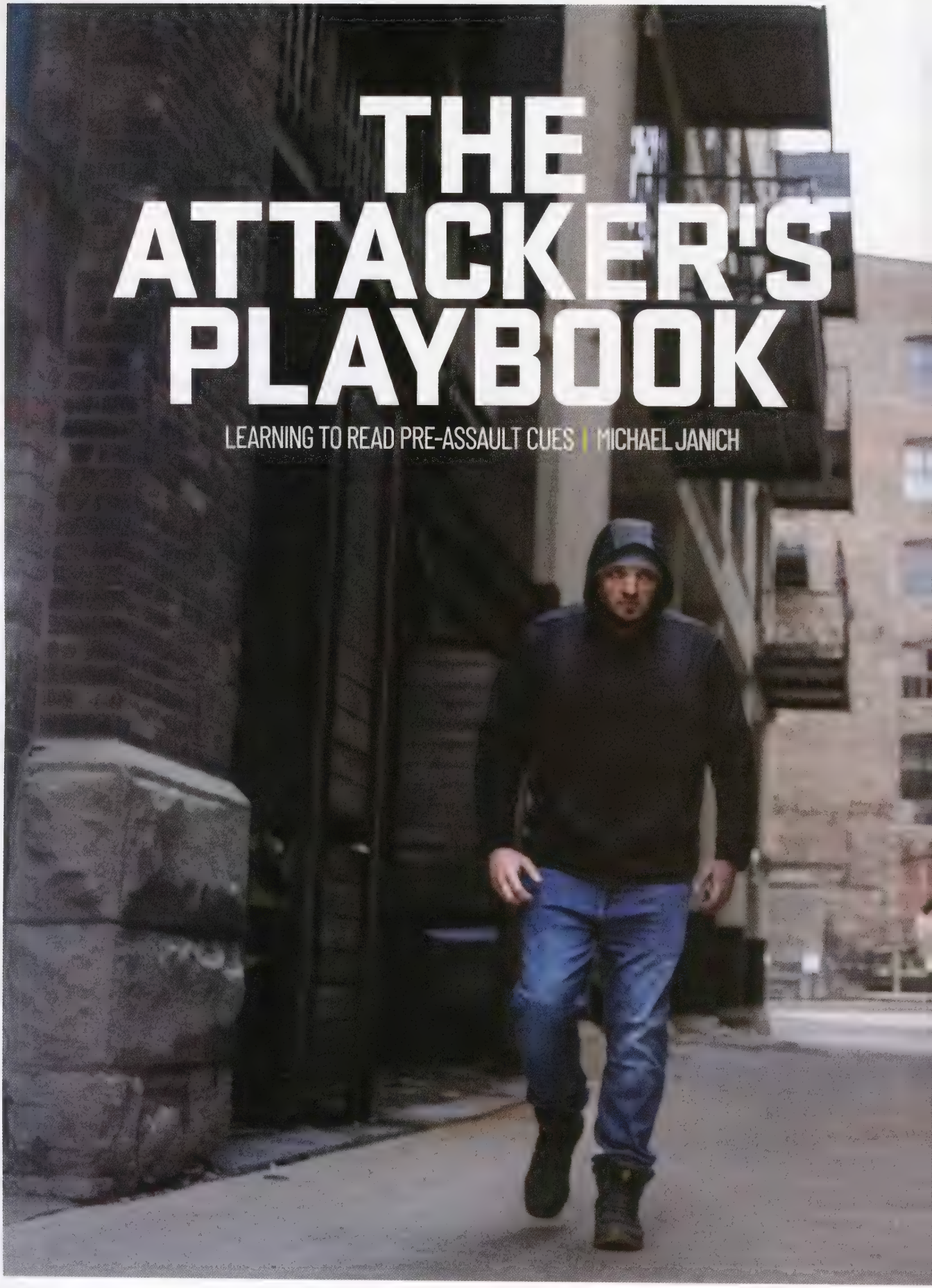
Some instructors have added to Cooper's four conditions, using Condition Black to address perceived gaps in his original teaching. Some define Condition Black as the moment the trigger press occurs as Condition Red escalates to deadly force. Others use it to describe dealing with the aftermath of a shooting. Some even characterize Condition Black as the state of being frozen and immobilized by panic in the face of a deadly threat. However, the whole point of the Color Code is to prevent panic, making this Condition Black response the result of improper training rather than a necessary addition. My advice? Keep the Color Code simple.

Detractors argue that individuals cannot go through life using the Color Code without becoming overly paranoid or posing a threat to themselves and others. That's hogwash. Most responsible concealed carriers who adopt the Color Code realize they have already been practicing it to some degree. The goal is to not be caught off guard by a deadly attacker. Instead, as Cooper intended, you should acknowledge that such a situation can happen but also realize that you are prepared to handle it because you train and practice good situational awareness.

And remember that this system was devised by someone with vast knowledge of personal defense. Lean on his experience and ingrain it into your routine if you haven't already. Don't gamble with your life.

THE ATTACKER'S PLAYBOOK

LEARNING TO READ PRE-ASSAULT CUES | MICHAEL JANICH



Criminals are, by definition, predators. Like animals in the wild, they typically exhibit predatory behavioral patterns as they stalk their prey, especially in the moments before launching an attack. For students of self-protection, learning to recognize and react to these pre-incident indicators is a critical survival skill that can often allow you to avoid trouble before it starts.

Even if you aren't able to completely sidestep danger, being aware of these indicators will maximize your options, giving you additional time to prepare and execute your defensive response.

HUMAN NATURE

Purposely assaulting another person is, for most people, an unnatural act. While habitual criminals and certain individuals may be experienced and even comfortable with violence, such actions still fall outside the realm of normal human behavior.

To make something that is distinctly abnormal appear normal, violent actors often overcompensate. They also consciously set themselves up for success, displaying pre-incident indicators that can reveal their intentions, but only if you know how to identify them.

"Awareness" and "situational awareness" are terms frequently used in self-defense training, but often in general terms. To be effectively aware of danger, you must understand what danger looks like as it develops. Instead of relying on using a fire extinguisher to put out flames, you should aim to smell smoke before the fire ignites.

With that in mind, here are the most common pre-incident indicators of violent attacks along with key details to help you understand and recognize them more readily.

Closing Distance

In Western culture, we typically maintain a comfortable distance from others, especially when few people are around. However, an attacker wants to get close because launching an assault from close range provides him or her with the element of surprise and gives you less time to react.

Closing distance can happen suddenly, such as when someone walks up to you or sits down next to you. It can also occur in a more subtle way known as "boundary testing." You should be wary of any unknown person who seems determined to get close to you, regardless of the method he or she uses to do so.

Boundary Testing

Most criminals assess their potential victims before deciding to attack. A common tactic is to engage a target with a question, testing the person's awareness and willingness to set and enforce boundaries.

Classic examples of this ploy include asking for the time, requesting money and asking for directions. If your response is to look down at your watch, reach in your pocket or turn your head to point the way, you're lowering your guard. In doing so, you fail to set and maintain strong boundaries, inadvertently inviting a criminal to inch closer.

Coordinated Motion

If you're walking down the street and a seated person suddenly gets up to follow you, walk parallel to you or move on a convergent course, that's suspicious. If two people do it, it's even more concerning.

Pay attention to the people around you and how they react — or, more often, don't react — to your presence. Look for movements or actions that seem triggered by you, and be prepared to alter your pace, stop, change course or seek refuge to keep yourself safe.

CONCEALED THREAT
Watch for unnatural arm movement or clenched hands — a sign that someone may be hiding a weapon, such as this man gripping a knife behind his leg as he closes in on a potential target.

Hidden Hands

People naturally swing their arms when they walk and, unless they're carrying something, their hands are usually open. However, a person concealing a weapon may move very differently.

When a small weapon, such as a knife, is hidden in the hand, the fingers will not be naturally extended, or the thumb may not be visible. Someone concealing a weapon behind his or her leg or back will also not swing that arm while walking, causing his or her stride to appear off.

Another potential cause for concern is someone with his or her hands in his or her pockets or someone carrying an object, such as a jacket or a newspaper (and these days, especially a newspaper), that conceals his or her hands from view. Similarly, be wary of anyone openly carrying an object — particularly a glass bottle — that could be used as a weapon.

Grooming Actions

People who are up to no good often try very hard to appear casual and nonthreatening in the moments immediately before they attack. While casual grooming actions, such as smoothing hair or scratching the face, appear natural when they're done subconsciously, they look contrived and unnatural when they're done intentionally.

If an unknown person seems to be trying too hard to look natural and relaxed, it's a warning sign of potential danger. This type of behavior frequently precedes a violent attack, but it can also indicate that a verbal altercation is about to turn physical.

Furtive Glances

Criminals don't want to get caught, so they're always on the lookout for potential witnesses and surveillance cameras. Often, the last thing they do before launching an attack is actively scan for anyone who might witness their actions.

Once again, casually glancing around purposefully and repeatedly looks suspicious. When scanning for witnesses is combined with other pre-incident indicators, the warning signs become even more obvious.

Target Glancing

Violent attackers often visually fixate on their targets before they strike.

WWW.RITONOPTICS.COM

SHOOT RIGHT.
SHOOT RITON.

If you've been waiting to enter the world of pistol-mounted optics, the excuses are gone. Riton has a full assortment of red dot solutions. Open and closed emitters, common footprints, and prices that eliminate any excuse you have to be tied to your iron sights.

RITON
SEE THE DIFFERENCE

WWW.RITONOPTICS.COM
Quality, Value and Service are at the core of everything we do at Riton.

THIS IS RITON

HEADS UP
For decades, predators hid weapons under newspapers. Today, they are more likely to use a jacket or a sweatshirt.

If someone suddenly fixates visually on you or a specific part of your body, he or she is probably not admiring your looks. Similarly, if you notice someone staring at your jewelry, laptop or other high-value possession, take it as a warning sign to get your guard up and be ready to act.

Weight Shifting

One extremely disturbing form of assault that has emerged within the last few decades is the so-called "Knockout Game." The goal is to knock out an unsuspecting victim in public with a single punch — usually while an accomplice records the act on video.

Delivering a knockout punch typically requires a wind-up to generate sufficient power. In the moments before an attack, an assailant will shift his or her body weight to his or her rear leg, often look away briefly, turn back suddenly and then strike the victim. If you notice someone near you shifting his or her weight suspiciously, or if you see an unknown person pointing a cellphone camera in your direction, be prepared to react quickly and protect yourself.

HONING YOUR RECOGNITION SKILLS

Now that you have an understanding of what, specifically, to look for to avoid being victimized, what's the next step?

You should now focus on putting your pre-assault cues into a realistic context and understand the potentially disastrous consequences of failing to recognize them.

Thanks to YouTube and various social-media platforms, graphic videos of actual violent assaults are easy to find. Many of them include footage of the moments leading up to the attacks and document the pre-assault behaviors of the attackers. Although it can be unsettling to watch such videos, it's one of the best ways to validate your training and expand your understanding of pre-incident indicators. It's also a powerful way to motivate your training and reinforce your resolve to avoid becoming a victim.

As you analyze these videos, take careful note of the environments in which the attacks occurred and the time frames of the events. As a practitioner of skills such as shooting and physical self-defense, you might be tempted to fixate on the circumstances of the attacks and the tactics you might have used to fight back. While that perspective is useful, it's far from the best choice. Instead, your primary focus should be on identifying how the victims could have avoided or preempted the attacks before they ever happened.

Learning to recognize pre-incident indicators serves as a personal-protection early-warning system. When you know or even suspect that something bad is about to happen, you must be committed to taking action to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

The best option is to physically remove yourself from the situation, denying the criminal the opportunity to engage. To do that, you should actively look for avenues of escape, safe havens, obstacles you can put between you and the assailant, and barriers that can be used to your advantage.

Similarly, you should be prepared to instantly change your behavior to alter the dynamics of a situation to disrupt a criminal's plan of action, but don't do so in a challenging way that might inadvertently escalate the situation. Instead, simply stop or change course while visually acknowledging the potential threat. This sends a powerful message that you are not an easy target and may prompt the criminal to look elsewhere for prey.

Your actions may be amplified by other subtle preparatory movements, but avoid tipping your hand by brandishing a weapon or overtly priming your draw.

THE POWER OF AWARENESS

Awareness is, without a doubt, the most powerful tool in your personal-protection arsenal because it allows you to recognize and identify potential threats early in the process. The more notice you have that something bad may be happening, the more options you have to do something about it.

However, real awareness is more than just looking. It's about knowing exactly what to look for.

YOUR GUNS. YOUR BUSINESS.

YOUR PRIVACY MATTERS. That means 100% ANONYMITY for any firearm or accessory worth less than $5,000 (in other words, you don't have to share the serial number or other details about the item with the insurance company).

ACT NOW TO INSURE YOUR

HANDGUNS • LONG GUNS • SCOPES
GUN SAFES • SUPPRESSORS
BOWS AND ARROWS • AND MORE!

Get a **FREE QUOTE** in Under Two Minutes

ENDORSED BY THE USCCA

INTENTIONAL INTERVENTION

DECIDING IN ADVANCE WHO YOU'LL DEFEND | JOEL T. NADLER

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT
When there's glass breaking, you might be tempted to immediately get involved in whatever's happening. But don't be in too big of a hurry to get into a fight.

Understanding the common legal concepts surrounding self-defense is key to carrying a firearm, as is knowing the specific laws governing the use of force where you live and carry. Central to these broad principles is the use of force to protect others. Though I am not advocating that every individual who carries become a legal expert, concealed carriers have an obligation to understand the information needed to make clear choices, think through when to act and when not to, and consider the potential ramifications of a poor decision.

In many cases, even if the law allows you to act, it may be wiser to know when to be a good witness and reserve the use of force for protecting those closest to you. To make this easier in high-stress moments, I advocate deciding beforehand for whom you are willing to risk your life and freedom and for whom you are not. This preplanning will help you avoid having to rely on snap judgments in such a critical situation.

COMMON LAW

Although self-defense and use-of-force laws vary from state to state and even city to city, there are key components common to almost all laws within the United States. This common-law concept can be summarized as follows: An individual is justified in using deadly force to protect himself or herself, or another person, from what a reasonable and prudent person would perceive as an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury.

The specifics of your jurisdiction's laws may vary regarding definitions of such terms as "individual," "justified," "deadly force," "reasonable," "imminent" and "serious bodily injury," but the overall concept underlies most self-defense laws. While a deep dive into the legal implications of the use of force is beyond the scope of this article, suffice it to say that this fundamental principle should guide your preplanning.

There is also a difference between what the law allows and the decisions you make — decisions guided not just by legality but also by morality, ethics, psychology, personal considerations and potential consequences. For instance, just because an action aligns with your understanding of the law does not mean a prosecutor will not choose to bring charges, nor does it prevent the possibility of financial, psychological and personal repercussions.

Embedded within this common-law principle is the need to convince jurors that your actions were reasonable and prudent and that they would have taken similar actions in the same situation. Though the law is based on what you reasonably believed given the information available to you, an implicit factor in determining those actions is your understanding of what is actually happening.

When you're defending yourself or loved ones, you typically only need to assess the motives and intent of the aggressor. However, when you choose to defend another person — especially if he or she is a stranger — you must discern the intentions and motives of all parties involved. Deducting one person's intent can be difficult; imagine trying to do the same for multiple parties.

My general advice is to preplan for defending yourself and immediate family members. For all others, even if the law allows you to act, it may be wiser to call the authorities and be a good witness.

THE STAKES

The consequences of choosing incorrectly can include personal, psychological, financial and criminal repercussions. Whenever you decide to use force, you are exposing yourself to a multitude of potential consequences. A solid understanding of the law and its potential ramifications can help you preplan your responses, but the reality is that many financial and criminal consequences are not entirely within your control.

In addition to financial and criminal consequences, there can also be personal and psychological consequences. Personal consequences might include

FROM THE ARCHIVES

ACCIDENTAL STABBINGS AND SHOOTING IN NEW YORK

On May 25, 1879, the *New York Herald* reported that two men were fighting on the corner of Bowery and Spring Street. As George Rauch, a shoemaker, tried to get away from the fight, one of the men attempted to strike the other. Rauch threw up his arm to prevent the blow. The assailant had a knife in his hand and, instead of slashing his adversary, severed a main artery in Rauch's right arm. Rauch was taken to Chambers Street Hospital, where surgeons did not expect him to survive. The assailant escaped.

***

On Feb. 24, 1890, the *New York Herald* described another instance where two men engaged in a fight in front of Christina Holzheiser's residence on East 12th Street. Holzheiser attempted to intervene and separate the two strangers, but, as she did, one of the men, John Hinkel, accidentally plunged a knife into her chest, intending it for his opponent. Fortunately, unlike Rauch, Holzheiser's wound wasn't serious, and she appeared at Hinkel's arraignment in the Essex Police Court to testify against him.

***

On April 14, 1897, the *Buffalo Courier* noted that a game of poker became heated in Michael Mioducki's saloon. One of the players, 19-year-old John Ortowski, was the saloonkeeper's godson. Frustrated by losing money and buying drinks for his tablemates, Ortowski abruptly got up and made his way to the door. After the men exchanged words, a fight spilled out onto the sidewalk.

Mioducki pulled a .32-caliber revolver from a secret drawer behind the bar and rushed into the fray to aid his godson. He aimed the gun at one of the instigators and fired into the crowd. To his horror, Ortowski sank to the sidewalk, bleeding profusely from a gunshot wound to the right side of his chest.

The fight immediately stopped, and those who had been fighting with Ortowski carried the wounded man back into the saloon. He was taken to the Fitch Accident Hospital, where doctors removed the bullet. Fortunately, a rib had deflected it from penetrating his lung. Mioducki was arrested and charged with assault.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

how your family, coworkers, community and employer perceive you after the incident. Psychological consequences might involve ethical and moral struggles, including second-guessing actions that felt necessary in the moment but, with fuller knowledge, may no longer seem ethically defensible or morally sound.

These consequences are why I often advise people to avoid situations in which the use of force may be needed as a first line of defense. When possible, prioritize escaping the situation safely and being a good witness. You should consider the use of force only when there is no other safe option.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Instructors often use personal stories to reinforce key concepts. These stories can include their own experiences and those of others. While it may be tempting to edit these stories to highlight only positive decisions, the reality is that most situations involve a combination of right and wrong choices made in the moment. I prefer to present such stories with both the good and the bad intact. With that in mind, I'll share an experience I had that likely illustrates more poor choices than good. In my defense, this incident occurred when I was much younger.

I was out drinking with a few friends at a bar none of us knew much about. There were only a few other people in the establishment, and we were seated at a table drinking beer. A few other tables were occupied, and a few people were drinking at the bar itself. I was not armed, but my decisions still involved the use of force. While I was somewhat tuned in to what was going on in the rest of the bar, I was not in a state of heightened awareness.

On the evening mentioned, I became aware of a loud argument at the bar between a man about my size and a much smaller young woman. The exchange quickly grabbed everyone's attention, including mine. It was difficult to make out exactly what they were saying, but the woman was screaming at the man, who was clearly trying to ignore her.

Suddenly, the man grabbed the woman forcibly with both arms, lifted her off her feet and started shaking her vigorously. I remember thinking how completely overpowered she was; he was shaking her like a rag doll. The combination of my youth and, to be honest, a few beers led me to jump into the encounter. Although I wasn't applying any concepts of common law at the time, I was likely within my legal rights to defend another person from an imminent attack by someone capable of causing serious bodily harm. I engaged the apparent aggressor, knocking him away from the woman, and was prepared to either continue using force or lecture him on why a man should never strike a woman.

SURPRISE!

What I had not seen was that the woman in question had slipped past the bar's bouncer, who had paused to call the police but was also heading toward the altercation. I also hadn't seen that she had broken a beer bottle and was attempting to attack the man, which is why he was shaking her: to get her to drop the improvised weapon.

What I also didn't know was that the man, a regular at the bar, had already taken out a restraining order against the woman and was acting in self-defense. Meanwhile, the bartender was also calling the police to have the woman removed from the bar.

As soon as I freed the woman — who still held the broken bottle — she jumped onto my back, screaming something along the lines of, "Get off my man!"

The man stumbled back, looking dazed. The bouncer quickly grabbed the woman off me, disarmed her and dragged her — still screaming — out of the bar. She was arrested a few minutes later when the police arrived.

I was fortunate. The man, bartender, bouncer, EMTs and police all found my actions amusing, and no one pressed charges. I had walked away with some cuts on my back and a great story illustrating how you can make what seems like the right choice based on what you know yet still be entirely wrong.

STICK TO THE SCRIPT

You cannot plan for every eventuality, but the more you prepare for "what if?" scenarios under little or no stress, the more these become scripts from which you can draw in real-world encounters. The goal is not to freeze but rather begin to take actions that align with your personal goals and beliefs.

Today, I am much more aware of the potential consequences of using force, even when I believe I am legally justified. I have weighed these legal considerations against practical realities, recognizing that any use of force can lead to undesirable and unforeseen consequences.

What would I do today in that same argument between the man and the woman in the bar? I would likely move to get my friends to a safe place, be a good witness and let others take the risks. I'm not saying there are no situations in which I would choose to defend others, but my personal experiences have led me to preplan for defending primarily myself and those very close to me in most situations.

YOUNG DEFENDERS

SELF-DEFENSE LESSONS FOR KIDS | KRISTEN JACKSON

ABOVE ALL, TEACH YOUR KIDS THAT THEY HAVE VALUE AND ARE WORTH DEFENDING. AND THEN TEACH THEM TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. MAKE SURE THEY KNOW THAT SOMETIMES, WHEN IT COMES TO SOMEONE TRYING TO HARM THEM, VIOLENCE IS THE ONLY ANSWER.

As parents, we easily fall into the trap of believing we'll always be there to protect our kids. This doesn't necessarily mean we think harm can't come to them; it's just human nature to try to position ourselves as our children's protectors.

However, that's not always possible, especially as kids get older. Here are some tips and tricks to teach your kids about self-defense so that they can become their own best defenders.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GUNS

Gun owners tend to get a little single-minded about self-defense. We carry handguns for defensive use, train with them, obtain concealed carry permits and practice situational awareness. While we hope we never have to use our guns, we're prepared for the possibility that we might one day need to defend our lives or the lives of loved ones. But how does that translate to kids?

There's far more to self-defense than firearms. Even you, as a parent, should have more tools available than just your gun. Two top items to consider adding to your daily carry are pepper spray and a tourniquet. And guess what? Those are tools that kids above certain ages can learn to use too.

The age at which kids can legally possess pepper spray tends to vary by state, so make sure to check the laws in your area. As for the tourniquet, it's a valuable piece of gear — and applying one is a useful first-aid skill as kids get older. Statistically, you're more likely to need a tourniquet than a self-defense weapon.

STRANGER DANGER

Many of us are of a generation in which the concept of "stranger danger" was deeply instilled. Strangers were thought to be the greatest threat to our personal safety, and we were taught to avoid them. Here's the catch though: The people most likely to hurt your kids are often individuals they know — and it's frequently relatives.

Rather than teaching kids to be fearful of strangers, teach them to set their own healthy boundaries. Yes, kids should be aware that strangers aren't their best friends and shouldn't be treated as such, but they also need to know how to protect themselves from dangers that may be far closer to home.

That means, among other things, not forcing kids to hug or kiss anyone they don't want to hug or kiss. Believe it or not, this is a self-defense mechanism, and there's more than one way to defend yourself.

GET TRAINED TO GO HANDS-ON

A great way to introduce kids to the self-defense world is by getting them involved in martial arts. Any practice is beneficial, but certain forms are better suited for defensive purposes.

Brazilian jiu-jitsu is fantastic for kids and, atop its utility as a force option, it teaches responsibility, discipline and grappling skills. It's considered one of the best martial arts for self-defense, and it can be immensely beneficial to a child's upbringing. What age is old enough? Many schools offer classes starting at age 4, so it's simply a matter of contacting a school near you to find out.

MAKE A SCENE AND FIGHT BACK

Noisemakers, such as whistles, are often ineffective, and so is yelling, "Help!" The first thing kids should do when they're faced with a threat is try to escape, even if that means acting rude and belligerent. It's far better to be horribly rude to a stranger than to be polite and end up kidnapped — or worse.

Teaching your kids to be strong, stubborn and relentless in the face of a threat is a must. They need to understand that there are bad people in the world who want to hurt them and that they have your explicit permission to fight back. Don't freeze, don't automatically give up — fight.

Biting and clawing aren't just allowed; they're encouraged. Either option will leave a mark on the attacker — and transfer that attacker's DNA to the child — but it may also cause more of a commotion than the assailant is willing to risk.

HELP THEM LEARN TO TAKE AND THROW A PUNCH

I know what you're thinking: How can I recommend kids getting punched? We sometimes joke

that the problem with today's society is that no one gets punched in the face anymore. But the reality of being hit is that you realize it's not as scary as you thought and that you can battle through it. You learn that getting hit doesn't mean it's all over. This is one reason why — from a self-defense perspective — sports and martial arts are so beneficial for kids. Sure, kids become healthy and strong, but they also learn that they can get hurt and keep going.

When they're old enough, they might try out boxing, which is something my own daughter did. However, it's important to note that boxing isn't an ideal stand-alone sport for self-defense. Think of boxing as a helpful additional skill rather than a viable solution on its own. After all, the way to win an actual fight with a boxer is to simply take the fight to the ground, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu helps you handle the fight from there. Brazilian jiu-jitsu also teaches you how to fall, and that's more valuable than many people realize.

That said, even young kids can learn to throw a punch. My daughter was in grade school the first time I walked her through how to deliver a proper punch. Learning to use elbow strikes is even better, and these techniques typically work best for older kids.

No, we don't want to encourage our kids to fight, but sometimes conflict is unavoidable. It's far better that they know how to defend themselves than for them to be unskilled and unprepared.

BELIEVE YOUR KIDS

This might seem like an odd one to add as a final thought, but you need to listen to your kids. If they're uncomfortable around someone — yes, even a relative — you need to stop and listen.

Maybe there's a neighbor they don't like or a house they feel uneasy biking past. Whatever concerns they have, they might not express it in a way you'll instantly understand.

Listen to your kids and watch for warning signs of possible issues. Teach them to avoid potential trouble, including problem areas and behaviors that often lead to trouble. Don't simply dismiss their feelings or thoughts because they're kids. You'd be surprised at what your kids see that you might miss.

Above all, teach your kids that they have value and are worth defending, and then teach them how to defend themselves. Make sure they know that sometimes, when it comes to someone trying to harm them, violence is the only answer.

TEACHING FIREARMS SAFETY TO CHILDREN

If you're considering teaching your children about firearms, you might be wondering whether they're ready or if there's a "right age" at which to teach them.

In *Children's Firearms & Safety Fundamentals*, instructor and author Beth Alcazar emphasizes that teaching kids about firearms isn't about hitting a magic number — it's about developmental readiness. In addition, parents and instructors must tailor firearms education to different age groups. Here's a summary of Alcazar's recommendations based on these age ranges:

Ages 3 to 5 (Preschoolers)

At this stage, children are naturally curious but have short attention spans. The focus should be on simple safety rules, such as "Don't touch a gun; tell an adult." Repetition, visual aids and hands-on activities, such as coloring sheets and role-playing, work best. True comprehension of firearms handling is still beyond their grasp.

Ages 6 to 8 (Early Elementary)

Children begin to understand cause and effect, making this a good time to reinforce safety rules and introduce basic firearms concepts. This group benefits from structured lessons, hands-on demonstrations and supervised dry-fire practice using inert firearms. However, not all children in this age range are ready for live-fire training.

Ages 9 to 11 (Preteens)

Cognitive skills improve significantly, allowing for more-advanced safety discussions, firearms handling under strict supervision and structured range training with appropriately sized firearms (such as .22 LR rifles). They are beginning to think critically but may still struggle with impulse control, so constant supervision remains essential.

Ages 12 to 15 (Adolescents)

With greater physical coordination and cognitive maturity, young teens can begin formal shooting instruction with proper range etiquette. Many can handle handguns and rifles responsibly, but hormonal changes and social influences may impact judgment, necessitating ongoing guidance and reinforcement of safety principles.

Ages 16 to 18 (Young Adults)

By this stage, most teenagers can handle advanced training, defensive-shooting concepts and more-complex firearms types under supervision. They are developing independent thinking but still require structure and accountability in their learning.

Readiness isn't just about age. It's about maturity, emotional control and the ability to follow instructions. Parents and instructors should assess each child individually before introducing firearms training.

For a more thorough look at children's firearms and safety fundamentals, check out Alcazar's book, available from the USCCA Store.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

GUNSMITH ON THE GO

USCCA AR Toolkit Fix It Sticks

Keep hard-to-find specialty tools on hand

Easily field-strip and clean any AR-15

Remove stubborn takedown pins and castle nuts

Adjust optics with A2 front-sight adjustment

Fix, upgrade and modify with ease

Take it anywhere with included carrying case

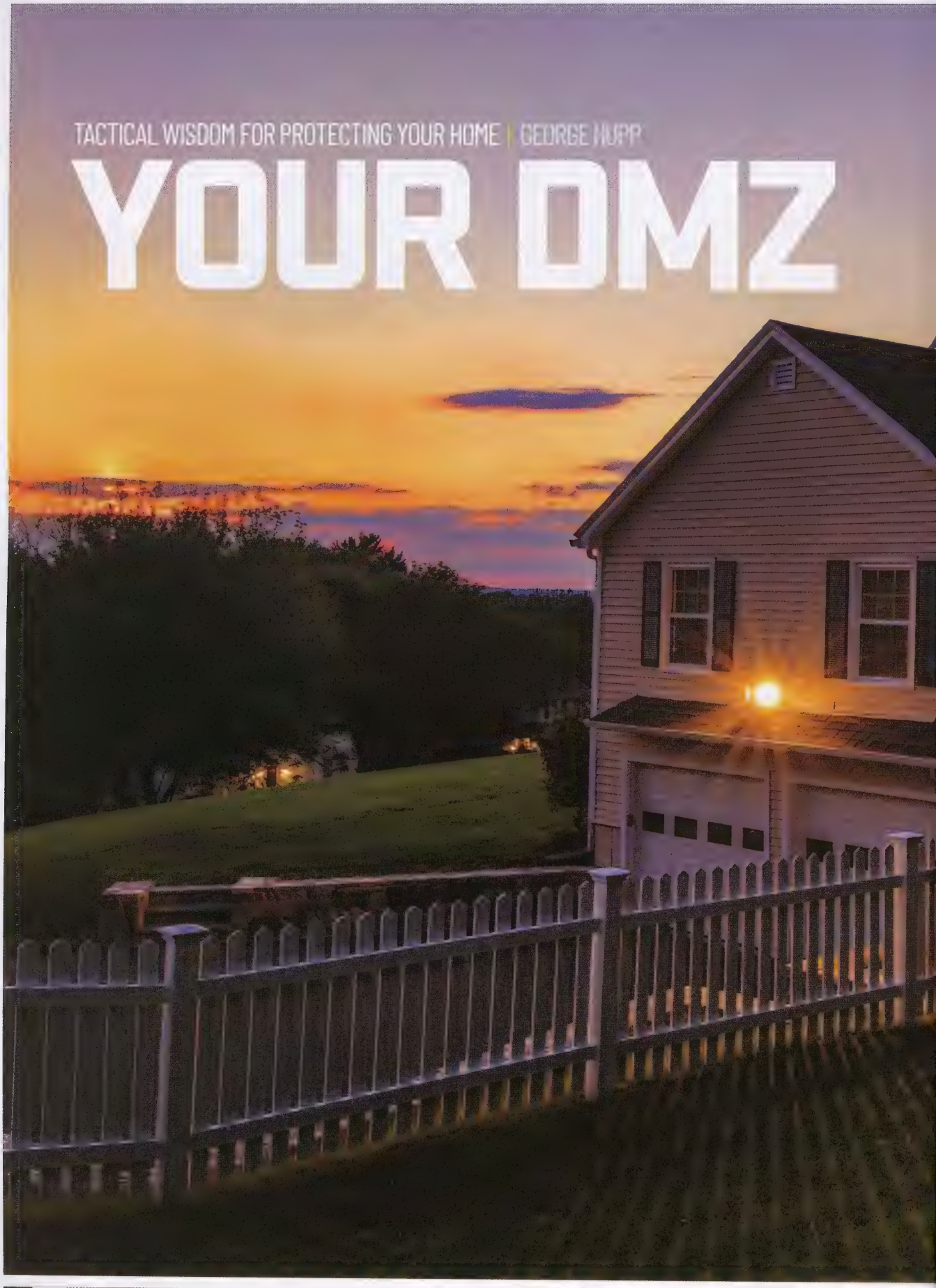
SCAN HERE TO BUY

Now Available in the USCCA Store!

Store.USConcealedCarry.com/fixitsticks

TACTICAL WISDOM FOR PROTECTING YOUR HOME | GEORGE NUPP

YOUR DMZ



Bill was a big, bearded, biker-looking dude. He had lost both of his legs above the knees in Vietnam fighting for his country.[1] He had a wheelchair, but he wasn't bound to it. With his long, powerful arms, he could scoot around on his bottom faster than a spider on a hot stove.

One night in the 1980s, Bill woke to the sound of someone running through his yard. He eased open a window, dropped to the ground and slid behind a bush. Sitting with his back to the wall, a Winchester 1200 resting across what was left of his lap, he stared into the darkness and listened intently.

Bill saw a silhouette skulking through his property. He leveled his shotgun at it and asked in a deep, gruff voice, "What are you doing in my yard?"

Bill's verbalization may have averted a tragedy.

"I'm a cop! I'm a cop!" the shadowy figure replied, switching on a flashlight to reveal a Pima County deputy's uniform. The deputy had been pursuing the suspects who had awoken Bill but had lost sight of them. He had slowed down to ensure that he wasn't running into an ambush.

We've all seen those humorous memes featuring a belt-fed machine gun, cannon or missile launcher with a caption that says, "Seriously. Get off my lawn." But quite seriously, is your lawn really the best place to fight your battles?

'MAY,' 'CAN' AND 'SHOULD'

When I teach use-of-force classes, I ask students to keep those three words in mind.

"May" refers to the law — when, for example, you are legally authorized to use force.

"Can" refers to your ability. Have you invested time in training and practice? Are you physically prepared and equipped to use a gun, a knife, pepper spray or even your empty hands?

Even if the law says you may and you have trained hard with your Glock, AR or whatever tool so you can, is it a good idea? Is it tactically sound? Should you go out into your yard to confront a prowler? Should you shoot someone in your yard or on your porch from inside your house?

Regardless of the laws in your jurisdiction, you probably should not.

In my home state of Arizona, for example, it's technically legal to go outside and confront someone who you see stealing a stereo from the pickup truck in your carport. Arizona Revised Statute 13-407.A states that:

> A person or his agent in lawful possession or control of premises is justified in threatening to use deadly physical force or in threatening or using physical force against another when and to the extent that a reasonable person would believe it immediately necessary to prevent or terminate the commission or attempted commission of a criminal trespass by the other person in or upon the premises.[2]

The key words are "threatening" and "criminal." The words "reasonable" and "necessary" are also important in this context.

Paragraph C of that statute defines "premises" as any real property, including the yard, driveway, front walk, porch, carport and the house itself. The Avon lady or UPS driver can lawfully enter your premises to ring your doorbell or leave a package on your porch. Law enforcement officers can also do so when they're serving legal processes or conducting a "knock and talk." A trespass becomes criminal only if it's done with the intent to commit a crime, such as breaking your car window and stealing the stereo.

In Arizona, one may threaten to use deadly physical force to stop a criminal trespass but may not use deadly force unless and until a life is threatened. Paragraph B of Arizona Revised Statute 13-407 explicitly states that an Arizonan may use deadly force (e.g., shoot a perpetrator) only if it is immediately necessary to defend his or her life or someone else's.

Do you see the potential for disaster here?

TACTICAL MISSTEP

Between 100,000 and 2.5 million times per year, when an armed American points a gun at a criminal and tells him or her to go assault someone else, the perpetrator goes away.[3] But make no mistake: If you enter into an interpersonal confrontation and you have a weapon, you may end up having to use it.

If a criminal is in my yard and I go out there to confront him or her — even though Arizona law says I may — one of two things is likely to happen: Either the perpetrator will leave or he or she will behave in a way that compels me to defend myself. Perhaps that man or woman will pull a knife or knock me down and start bouncing my head off the pavement.

If that man or woman compels me to defend myself and I end up shooting him or her, the jury will want to know why I didn't reasonably stay within the safe walls of my castle, call 911 and record video of any malfeasance to be used as evidence at the perpetrator's trial instead of mine.

Perhaps the definitive "we should've stayed inside" incident was when a couple in St. Louis believed (correctly or not) that protesters would burn their home to the ground. They sallied forth from their castle onto the lawn, armed with a handgun and an AR; neither appeared to have much in the way of firearms training. The woman pointed the pistol at the crowd, finger on the trigger, and — worst of all, for her — got photographed doing it.

It's even possible that their defensive display deterred imminent aggression. But regardless of what could, would or should have happened, and whether or not it was just, the couple was criminally charged, and their weapons were permanently confiscated.[4]

They could have stayed inside, grabbed a fat magic marker and sacrificed an old bed sheet, scrawling: "We support your right to peacefully protest but can defend ourselves if we feel threatened" (or words to that effect). They could have hung that message from a second-floor window, where it would have been seen by the crowd — and by the cameras.

HOLD THE HIGH GROUND

If deadly force had become necessary — say, for instance, if one of the St. Louis protesters had lit the rag of a Molotov cocktail — shooting the arsonist from a high angle could have minimized the risk of a missed shot or overpenetration injuring someone else. After all, Rule No. 4 of the firearms safety rules reminds you to know your target and what lies beyond it.[5] A compliant firing solution would have been nearly impossible to achieve from the horizontal angle the St. Louis homeowner had while standing on her lawn. Striking non-violent protesters behind the target would have been a near certainty.

Perhaps she had been trained to take kneeling headshots to address No. 4 issues in crowded shopping malls, but based on the gun-handling skills she displayed, that seems doubtful. Even if she had fired at an upward angle and succeeded in avoiding the other protesters, misses or overpenetrating rounds would have eventually come down somewhere else.

If the homeowners needed to shoot at all, it would have been optimal for them to fire at a steep downward angle from an elevated position, with the lawn below to absorb the bullets. That might have been achievable from a window on an upper floor or even from the roof, but not from outside the house.

IT ISN'T WORTH DYING OVER

You may have invested a lot of sweat equity into your lawn — fertilizing, watering and trimming it into exactly what you wanted. Maybe you've been paying off your mortgage for decades. You have every right to feel proprietary about your property. But even if your grandmother is buried in the backyard, that sacred ground is not worth killing or dying over.

If your daughter is fighting for her life against a violent prowler in the driveway, by all means, do what you must to rescue her. But every time a frightened homeowner shoots a lost teenager or a misdirected pizza-delivery driver through the front door, it further erodes public trust in responsible gun ownership. Worse still, it could lead to jail time. And the most tragic consequence? Unnecessary injury or loss of life.

If a crazed man is pounding on your front door and screaming for "Debbie" to come out, gather your family and fall back to your most defensible room regardless of whether there's actually a Debbie in your home.[6] Arm up, armor up (if you have the means) and call 911.

Even a studio apartment usually has a lockable bathroom. The more intervening barriers an intruder must break through to reach your family, the more time law enforcement has to respond. And If you do end up having to shoot, your court case will be stronger if the intruder has busted through more than one door to get to you.

THE DOWNSIDE OF EVACUATION

Some smart people suggest evacuating out the other side of your house, but that can create some of the same tactical disadvantages as confronting the intruder directly. You know who lives in your home. You don't know if the intruder has co-conspirators waiting outside. The Columbine murderers positioned themselves in two different locations in the parking lot, planning to gun down fleeing classmates if their bombs in the cafeteria detonated as planned. When those bombs failed to explode, they instead shot their way into the high school.[7]

One of the few valid reasons to evacuate your home during a confrontation is if rioters or arsonists have set it on fire. Humans have been burning or smoking their enemies out of fortifications for almost as long as they have used fire to stay warm.

On July 19, 1878, Andrew Boyle, a member of Sheriff George Peppin's posse, set fire to Alexander McSween's home to force him and his supporters, including Billy the Kid, out into the open where they could be shot. While McSween was killed, Billy the Kid escaped.[8] During the 1992 Los Angeles riots, business owners in Koreatown took to their rooftops with firearms to defend their properties from looting, arson and violence, deterring some rioters in the process.[9]

If you suspect impending arson — for example, if you can see a man in your yard trying to light a firebomb of some kind — you will not have the option of falling back to a safe room. Your family will need to stay near the windows to track, deter and, if necessary, use force against any perpetrator armed with an incendiary device.[10] However, be cautious about muzzle flash near a window with flammable fumes nearby.

THE BUFFER ZONE

Absent arson, consider your yard, walkway and porch a "DMZ" — a demilitarized zone — rather than a free-fire zone. A buffer. An early-warning area. Space to be traded for time.

Motion-sensor lights and barking dogs can enhance your early-warning system, buying you even more time. Landscaping, physical barriers and other aspects

WIN A FREE HANDGUN PRO II SAFE!
Vault PRO
VAULT PRO USA
Enter to WIN a
Vault Pro
Handgun Pro II Safe!
One Each: 10ga · 7ga · 3ga
No Purchase Necessary
Register Today
Scan the QR Code Below to Enter
EXCLUSIVE FOR CONCEALED CARRY SUBSCRIBERS
800-299-6929
America's Best Safes · Vault Doors · Shelters · All Made in USA
VAULTPROUSA.COM/CC
ACCREDITED BUSINESS Rating: A+
SCAN HERE

of environmental design can reduce the likelihood of your house and family being targeted for a break-in or home invasion. Even maintaining a well-tended yard is said to deter crime more effectively than living in a wild-prairie junkyard. However you decide to do so, improve the security of your outside property as your budget, time, and — if you rent or live in a housing community — landlord or HOA permits. Doing so could end up making the difference between security and tragedy.

ENDNOTES

(1) *As I recall Bill's story, someone in his patrol tripped a "Bouncing Betty." The Soviet OZM-3 and OZM-4 anti-personnel bounding mines were similar in principle to the German Schrapnellmine (also known as the "S-mine") of World War II and had the same nickname. Jacques F. Baud,* Warsaw Pact Weapons Handbook *(Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1989), 107-110; David C. Isby,* Weapons and Tactics of the Soviet Army *(London: Jane's Publishing Co. Limited, 1988), 335.* **(2)** *Obviously, unless you live in Arizona, this law does not apply to you. It's incumbent upon you to know the laws in your own jurisdiction. See Arizona Revised Statutes Section 13-407.* **(3)** *Lacking corpora — bodies to count — accurate numbers for incidents where nobody gets shot are difficult to tally precisely. Charles F. Wellford, John V. Pepper and Carol V. Petrie, eds., "The Use of Firearms to Defend Against Criminals," in* Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review *(Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2005), 102-119, DOI.org/10.17226/10881.* **(4)** *For more about what happened to that couple, see K.L. Jamison, "Defense of the Home: Legal Considerations and Best Practices,"* Concealed Carry Magazine *21, no. 7 (October 2024): 36.* **(5)** *No. 4 also tells you to know what is between you and the threat as well as what is near the threat and target.* **(6)** *Yes, this scenario is based on a real incident. He never found Debbie, but he was arrested.* **(7)** *A typical terrorist TTP (Tactic, Technique and Procedure) involves deploying a suicide bomber into a house of worship while armed assailants position themselves outside the exits, waiting to gun down fleeing worshipers. Dave Cullen,* Columbine *(New York: Twelve, 2009), 41-46.* **(8)** *Robert M. Utley, "The Five-Day Battle" in* High Noon in Lincoln: Violence on the Western Frontier *(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 92-111.* **(9)** *Ashley Dunn, "King Case Aftermath: A City in Crisis: Looters, Merchants Put Koreatown Under the Gun: Violence: Lacking Confidence in the Police, Employees and Others Armed Themselves to Protect Mini-Mall,"* Los Angeles Times, *May 2, 1992, LATimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-05-02-mn-1281-story.html.* **(10)** *During the first Intifada, Palestinian leaders discontinued the use of Molotov cocktails for two reasons: First, they looked bad on TV, as their use often justified a deadly force response by Israeli security forces. Second, they posed a greater danger to those lighting and throwing them than to their intended targets. Thomas X. Hammes,* The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century *(Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), 99.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

HOMEOWNER SHOOTS SON'S FRIEND MISTAKEN AS A BURGLAR

On Dec. 2, 1914, *The Atlanta Journal* reported that William B. Carhart, the former president of the Carhart Shoe and Manufacturing Co., and his wife, Mary, returned to their second-floor apartment in a fashionable district of the city at around 1 a.m. They had attended a dance party at the Capital City Club earlier that evening. William retired to his room, and Mary headed to the bathroom. As she passed her adult son Lewis' bedroom — he was away on business — she noticed a stranger fumbling through his dresser drawer. She cried out to her husband that a burglar was in their home and told him he'd better get his pistol. William retrieved a revolver from his bureau and went to investigate.

As he entered his son's room, William noticed the stranger on the back porch, climbing over the banister to jump down into the courtyard. Something gleamed in his hand, and William thought it could be a pistol. William fired two shots, one striking the intruder in the chest and causing his lifeless body to plummet 30 feet to the ground below.

The deceased intruder was later identified as 38-year-old James Patillo Callaway, a prominent broker and a personal friend of Lewis Carhart. Callaway had been in the Carharts' home many times as their son's guest. He had attended the same dance party that evening but had left before William and Mary. The gun William thought he saw turned out to be a heavy ring on Callaway's finger that glistened in the moonlight.

Callaway's brother, Frank E. Callaway, a prominent lawyer and president of the Atlanta Baseball Association, urged the police to rigorously investigate the case.

"A stigma has been put upon the name of my dead brother," he told one reporter. "The police have assured me that they will do all in their power to probe the mystery."

While Callaway's motive for being in the Carharts' home — or what he was searching for in his friend's room — remains a mystery, the police found no evidence of forcible entry, as the Carharts were prone to leaving their front door unlocked.

While the court ruled Carhart's killing of Callaway a justifiable homicide, shooting a stranger — even a burglar — leaving your home or property is not advisable. Callaway posed no immediate threat to Carhart, as he was in the act of climbing over a banister to leave the home when he was shot. While a court in 1914 sided with Carhart, a modern court would be unlikely to do the same. In the end, William had slain his son's friend and had to live with that. While Carhart was testifying, he broke down into tears, taking some time to regain his composure. In addition, his wife suffered a nervous breakdown after the tragedy.

Shooting without a clear and immediate threat, and solely in defense of property, is not self-defense. Stuff can be replaced; lives can't.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

NOW OFFERING

USCCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS FOR:

- EMPLOYERS
- ASSOCIATIONS
- LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES
- HOUSE OF WORSHIP SECURITY TEAMS
- RANGES & TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS

USCCA Membership benefits include lifesaving education, training AND self-defense liability insurance*. Help your team enjoy the peace of mind that comes with being prepared for what happens before, during and after an act of self-defense.

LEARN HOW A USCCA GROUP MEMBERSHIP CAN BENEFIT YOUR TEAM

Contact our Benefits Team by calling **262-799-5044** or visit **www.DeltaDefense.com** to schedule a free consultation.

USCCA

Presented By: DELTA DEFENSE LLC

*Insurance has been purchased by the USCCA and is one of the benefits of membership in the USCCA. USCCA Members are additional insureds under a policy issued to the USCCA by Universal Fire and Casualty Insurance Company, an insurance company with its principal place of business in Hudsonville, MI. Coverage and benefits are subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the insurance policy. Information provided herein is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a representation of coverage that may exist in any particular situation. Contact Delta Defense's Customer Engagement Team at 800-674-9779 with any questions.

Delta Defense LLC provides sales, marketing, operations and administrative support services to the USCCA and is a licensed insurance agency in all 50 states and the District of Columbia with its principal office in West Bend, WI. Delta Defense LLC does business as Delta Defense Insurance Services in California. California License #0M34093

DECEPTIVELY NOT-SO-SIMPLE

A revolver is often touted as "simple" and "reliable," but there's actually a lot going on inside. And if even one component falls out of time, you've got problems.

TUNED-IN

MASTERING REVOLVER TIMING AND RELIABILITY | BOB CAMPBELL

Some of us have learned about revolver timing the hard way, such as experiencing a revolver spitting lead from the barrel-cylinder gap, failing to lock up properly or even allowing the cylinder to spin in the opposite direction intended.

I have seen a revolver with a cylinder that wobbled so badly that the firing-pin strike was off-center. Timing problems are most often the product of a gun tinkerer without real knowledge, though a hard-used revolver can suffer timing problems and a cheaply made revolver might never function correctly. Timing is timing, as I learned many years ago when my dad had me change the spark plugs in his '63 Cadillac. Turns out there's a certain order of things that cannot be disturbed. (Luckily, I was able to go out in a junkyard and find another 20-year-old Cadillac 390 and take notes on the proper firing order.)

THE FORCING CONE
This is the part of a revolver at the back of the barrel at which the bullet makes the jump from the cylinder to the bore.

Fortunately, there are excellent manuals to be had, both bound and online, in text and in video form. And with good revolver gunsmiths so few and far between these days (not to mention far behind on work orders), do-it-yourself gunsmithing is becoming more necessary than ever.

TIMING EXPLAINED

A self-loading handgun cycles, as in the action in the recoil cycle sees to it that a spent case is ejected from the pistol's chamber and a fresh round is stripped from the magazine and loaded into the chamber. Double-action-revolver timing is different (and a lot more mechanical than the piston-style operation of a self-loader). In basic terms, the revolver is actuated by a long pull of the trigger, which turns the cylinder and lines the chamber up with the firing pin.

The first revolvers were single-action types. Single-action means the trigger performs a single action: It drops the hammer. The idea of a trigger-cocking revolver introduced many complications, including a double-action-trigger return spring. That isn't to say that single-action revolvers can't go out of time. In fact, if an owner engages in "fanning" the hammer, or holding down the trigger and quickly running the hammer with the heel of the non-firing hand, he or she can almost guarantee timing issues will follow.

The double-action revolver's trigger press rotates the cylinder and lines it up with the barrel and forcing cone in order to fire accurately. More than a dozen parts are involved and, in most cases, they sync together wonderfully.

Note I said, "in most cases."

The firing sequence begins when the shooter presses the trigger rearward. This action initiates the internal mechanism: The cylinder stop momentarily drops out of the notch, allowing the cylinder to rotate to the next chamber before locking it securely in place again. Pressure from the trigger and sear begins to move the hammer to the rear. At the end of its travel, the hammer "breaks" from the sear (or, more accurately, slips free of the sear) and flies forward to either strike the firing pin or drop the firing pin directly on a cartridge primer, thus firing the revolver. (A few revolvers still use a hammer-mounted firing pin, though a firing pin is now typically located in the frame.) But more is happening before the round is fired.

As a shooter presses the trigger, a piece attached to the action called the "hand" is actuated. This piece moves against the ratchet on the rear of the cylinder, aligning one of the chambers of the cylinder with the firing pin for firing. At this point, the cylinder stop has risen and locked into place. The hand (also called the "pawl") isn't a dainty thing, but it's only the tip of the hand that contacts the ratchet — which is also the end of the ejector rod and serves not only as the ratchet but also as the ejector rod "star."

As far as which revolvers have or had the "best" lockup, it's noted that what Colt used to call its "bank vault" lockup may have aided in greater accuracy. But as with everything else in firearms and shooting, there was compromise in play. This tighter lockup transferred more wear to the action, and a Colt revolver went out of time more often — just ask any old PPC shooter.

The forcing cone is so called because it's slightly cone-shaped and is the part of the revolver at which a moving bullet is forced into the barrel. Located at the cylinder end of the barrel, it's wider than the barrel and allows the bullet to enter the bore even without a perfect lockup. So the bullet makes the jump from the cylinder to the barrel at the forcing cone, and it does so from the "throat" of the cylinder, or the area in the chamber in front of the bullet when it's still seated in its cartridge.

Modern Smith & Wesson, Colt and Ruger revolvers maintain dimensions that are quite tight, and these are among the most accurate revolvers ever manufac-

tured. Each has its adherents, and unlike a lot of revolvers manufactured 50-plus years ago, it will take more Magnum loads than I'm willing to fire to bring them to the point of needing a rebuild. As an example, Ruger's longevity is in some ways a result of forgiving tolerances, and yet the GP100 is among the most accurate revolvers in history. But regardless of manufacture, problems with timing begin when a part becomes worn.

There is use and there is abuse, and abuse figures into timing issues more often than not. I was called into a shop twice in the past year on revolver issues; one revolver was a mess. An employee who is where I once was on the learning curve decided to replace parts in a well-worn pre-World War II Smith & Wesson. The problem was that there are five generations of these "Hand Ejector" revolvers, and while their parts may look the same, they're not. He'd basically put short-action parts in a long-action revolver. I got it done, but all I could do was gut the action and start over. The other was very simple: a stuck sear from varnished lubricant. A bit of cleaning and the piece was up and running.

WHAT GOES WRONG WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

When honest wear causes problems, it's usually the hand or the cylinder stop — most often the hand in a Colt and the cylinder stop or cylinder-stop spring in a Smith & Wesson. I have seen quite a few ex-institutional revolvers with worn ratchets. The preponderance of evidence seems to point to someone opening the cylinder, checking the load and slamming the cylinder home with a flick of the wrist film-noir style. This brings on eccentric wear.

An example of what this kind of wear can cause is "end shake" (sometimes called "cylinder wobble"), which allows the cylinder to get too close to or too far away from the forcing cone. This often causes the revolver to spit pieces of jacket material or lead during firing, which becomes very apparent to even a casual shooter. End-shake bushings take care of this situation, do not require much finesse to replace and are available through Brownells.com.

RUNNING A CHECKUP

To check timing, first triple-clear the chambers to be certain the revolver isn't loaded. Then press the trigger slowly. You'll see the bolt stop drop away from its perch in the bolt cut. Then, as you cycle the revolver's action, the bolt stop will lock into place in the bolt cut opposite the next chamber up in the firing order.

With the revolver in the firing position, check the barrel-cylinder gap with a feeler gauge. The barrel-cylinder gap should be 0.005 to 0.006 inches, but a little larger is acceptable. At 0.004, the revolver may begin to bind from powder-residue buildup in intensive firing.

If you have an action problem, it's often in the hand. There are stopgap means of working through this problem, and some of them even work. You may remove the hand, put it on a vise or anvil, and beat it with a hammer. The hand will become longer, and it will work for a while. A cylinder stop may profit from the same peening treatment.

If the revolver needs a new hand, begin with an oversized hand and carefully file and polish it to the correct fit. As far as cylinder stops go, modern manufacturing can swoop in to save you a few bucks. The Power Custom steel oversize cylinder stop I would use is $45.99, while an original Smith & Wesson MIM cylinder stop for modern revolvers is only $15.49. As with everything else with your firearms and gear, there's likely to be an option that's agreeable to you.

STUDY UP TO STAY ON TOP

When you understand how a revolver functions, right down to how the trigger makes the cylinder turn, the time you spend shooting becomes more interesting, and you become less reliant on anyone but yourself. Never abuse your revolver, and always pay attention to how it's shooting through the lens of potential timing issues. It's never been easier to learn about revolver maintenance and repair than it is now, and if you proceed with caution and knowledge, you should be able to enjoy years of service out of your revolver.

THE HAND AND CYLINDER STOP
The hand is the small tab of steel visible on the back of this cylinder's frame. It raises as the hammer is drawn back, engaging the "star" on the back of the ejector rod and turning the cylinder. The cylinder stop is the rounded piece of steel protruding up from the bottom of the frame, and it locks the cylinder in place as the revolver is readied for firing.

SOURCES

Brownells: Brownells.com
Colt: Colt.com
Ruger: Ruger.com
Smith & Wesson: Smith-Wesson.com
Power Custom: PowerCustom.com

DEVELOPING A DEFENSIVE MINDSET | BRAD LEWIS

CONDITION ORANGE

It was a warm summer evening in the South, and my wife and I had decided to run into the grocery store to pick up a few items. It was after 9 p.m., and the store was pretty quiet.

Shortly after walking in, I noticed someone enter the store wearing a long coat and holding his hands in his pockets. While my wife added a few items to the cart, I kept my eyes on this individual.

He seemed agitated, pacing around the store as if he were looking for someone in particular. The long coat was out of place for the weather. I couldn't see his hands, and his behavior didn't match that of someone shopping for groceries.

I whispered one word to my wife: "orange."

In an instant, she knew I had observed something out of place and potentially dangerous.

THE TENETS OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Before I explain the significance of the word "orange," I'll first discuss situational awareness.

Situational awareness is the ability to identify, process and understand elements in your environment to anticipate potential threats and make informed decisions to enhance your safety. It involves being fully present, aware of your surroundings and mindful of how circumstances might evolve.

Key aspects of situational awareness include:

- **Observing.** Actively monitor your surroundings, including people, objects and potential hazards. Pay attention to details such as body language, unusual behavior and environmental changes.
- **Understanding.** Interpret the significance of what you observe. For example, recognize if someone's actions seem out of place or if a situation doesn't feel right.
- **Projecting.** Anticipate future events based on your current observations. This helps you stay ahead of potential dangers by considering "what if?" scenarios.
- **Trusting Your Instincts.** If something feels wrong or uncomfortable, it probably warrants caution. Intuition can be a powerful tool for identifying threats before they materialize.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

When you sit down at a restaurant, which direction do you face? In other words, are you in a position that gives you the best opportunity to observe your surroundings? Personally, I like to face the main entrance while also being able to see as much of the restaurant as I can. While I get situated and review the menu, I also start projecting scenarios in my head.

What if an armed intruder comes through the front door? Just about every restaurant has a rear door leading into the kitchen, typically used for deliveries. I make sure I identify the quickest route to the kitchen. But keep in mind that this applies to more than just an active-shooter situation. Exiting through the kitchen could also apply if a vehicle suddenly crashes through the front door.

Your observations should also include assessing other patrons. Do you see someone frequently touching his or her hip or waist? This could indicate the individual is checking the position of his or her concealed firearm. Such movements, however, don't necessarily mean the individual is an adversary. It could simply mean he or she is a like-minded individual who is new to concealed carry and is still getting comfortable with it. We've all been there.

When you're walking down the street, are you looking at the ground? Or, worse yet, are you captivated by your cellphone? If so, you may miss the person who is focused on you and intends to take advantage of your distraction.

What if you're not distracted and notice someone locking eyes on you, heading in your direction? The individual's hands are in his or her pockets, and the individual's pace is quicker than the average person's. Honestly, the person could just be in a hurry and so lost in thought that he or she forgot staring is impolite. But do you really want to wait where you are to find out that individual's intentions?

How you respond depends on your environment. Can you duck into a store? Can you cross to the other side of the street? Can you change direction? How the person in question reacts to your actions can help you gauge his or her intent, but only if you've stayed on top of observing your surroundings and have already anticipated a response to what might transpire.

THE COLOR CODE

So why did the simple word "orange" put my wife into action when I whispered it in the grocery store? Because she's familiar with Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper's Color Code of Awareness. Cooper, a retired U.S. Marine Corps officer, developed the Color Code to teach mindset as a critical component of surviving a threat. It consists of four colors or conditions: White, Yellow, Orange and Red.

When you are in Condition White, you are completely unaware and, therefore, most vulnerable. I've heard it said that the only place in which you should be in Condition White is the comfort of your own home. I disagree. Even in your home, you are vulnerable to armed intruders, fires, severe weather and other extraordinary events. Instead, consider sleeping to be the only time you should be in Condition White.

Condition Yellow aligns with situational awareness and the state

STAYING OUT OF THE FIGHT

KiOwana Phillips has been a USCCA Member since 2019. She's the founder and owner of One Shot Firearms Academy (with locations in Kentucky and North Carolina) and an active-duty sergeant major in the U.S. Army. In addition, Phillips serves on the board of directors for the Moebius Syndrome Foundation and is a mom. She's a busy woman, but she also managed to add USCCA Certified Instructor to her resume.

Even though Phillips' Army background taught her the importance of situational awareness, conflict avoidance and de-escalation, USCCA education and training delves even deeper into those topics. She finds it eye-opening, noting that avoiding a threat in the first place is not something that's talked about enough.

"I teach and talk to my students on a monthly, sometimes almost weekly, basis, on situational awareness, specifically, and the Color Code of Awareness," Phillips stated. "And no matter what kind of class I'm teaching, I'm always talking about that, because in today's society, it seems like it's very easy to fall into Condition White."

She has roughly 20 different real-life examples handy that she uses in the classroom with her students. Some of these scenarios come from true stories in the news or from situations that happened locally. She asks her students questions, such as: What would you do in this specific situation? When would it be appropriate to use force? Can you de-escalate the situation or defend yourself? This encourages them to analyze how they would respond in that particular incident and apply the same mindset in other situations.

One incident she uses is a personal story that took place on a drive between Kentucky and North Carolina. A man in a truck with a trailer pulled up beside her, rolled down his window, and began yelling and making aggressive hand gestures. Phillips wasn't sure if he thought she had cut him off or if something else had upset him, but he was clearly very angry. At one point, it appeared as though he was reaching toward his passenger seat to grab something — perhaps a weapon — but she couldn't be sure.

Phillips had her firearm mounted in her truck where she could easily access it. She made the split-second decision to brake — removing herself from his line of fire in case he pointed a firearm at her — instead of reacting by reaching for her own gun. Slowing down removed her from the confrontation, and the enraged driver eventually sped off. She defused the situation peacefully through her composure and smart thinking.

"Some people would argue back with the person, [and] maybe someone will pull off to the side of the road," she noted. "There's a lot of different scenarios or ways that scenario could have gone wrong."

If someone does find himself or herself in a threatening situation, Phillips stressed another tool that, in her opinion, people don't appreciate enough: his or her own voice.

"I am always advocating about the power of our voice," she said, "which is definitely underutilized in de-escalating a situation, because we don't necessarily always have to go to drawing a firearm in a situation that does not call for that."

Phillips explained that you can't talk about situational awareness, avoiding danger and de-escalation without discussing them all together.

"I don't think I've ever been in a situation where one is more important than the other," she said. "I would say situational awareness comes first, because you don't know anything if you're not paying attention to your surroundings. But situational awareness and, I would say, avoiding danger in the first place are probably the two most important to advocate for, because a lot of situations can be avoided. And maybe your firearm is not even necessary."

One of her favorite ways to get educational material from the USCCA is through *Concealed Carry Magazine*. Whenever she receives the magazine in the mail, she carves time out of her packed schedule to do a deep dive.

"[T]here is nothing that comes out from [the] USCCA, whether it's email or anything that I've learned over the years, that I am not applying to myself and my husband and my boys and family and to students in the community," she said.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

you should maintain throughout your waking hours. To be clear, this is not a state of paranoia; no one wants to live like that. Instead, it's a lifestyle of observing your environment, understanding the significance of what you see, trusting your instincts and projecting scenarios in your mind so that you don't have to think through options in the heat of the moment.

When you recognize a specific potential threat, you've reached Condition Orange, but the key word here is "potential." This does not mean the threat is realized; it simply means that something is not right or is out of place based on your observations.

Condition Orange is your opportunity to avoid an escalating situation. If you've been practicing projection as part of your situational awareness, you should already have a set of actions from which to choose. But sometimes, your set options might not work out the way you'd like or expect, and the situation escalates to Condition Red.

At this point, you are in the fight. However, this doesn't mean you're out of alternatives. If you were projecting scenarios ahead of time, did you identify areas of cover? If safe cover isn't an option, can you at least find concealment? Have you predetermined how you will protect any loved ones you've got with you? Did you remember the restaurant exit through the kitchen?

MAKE IT PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

Honing your situational awareness enhances your ability to recognize threats early, make proactive decisions and respond effectively to emergencies — whether in daily life, travel or high-risk environments. And that sharpening begins at home. When

you're preparing for the day, take a mental walk-through of your planned activities, asking yourself questions such as:

- Am I carrying the best firearm for my needs? And is my carry method appropriate for the day's activities?
- Will I be in a situation in which carrying a firearm isn't a viable choice? If so, is a less-lethal option, such as pepper spray, a reasonable alternative?
- Do I need to adjust how or even what I carry throughout the day?
- Does it make sense to plan my day to avoid crowds or being out after nightfall?

Spending a few minutes to think through your day can help keep you in Condition Yellow. You can even make this a game between yourself and others who understand the Color Code.

When you see someone walking down the street, wearing earbuds or staring at his or her phone, ask each other: "What color is he (or she) in?" It's hard to argue anything but Condition White.

When you're driving on the interstate and spot an aggressive driver, take a moment to observe how other drivers react. If those drivers are backing away and giving the aggressive driver room, they could be in Condition Orange, recognizing a potential threat and taking action to avoid an escalating situation.

Practicing these real-life exercises helps develop instinctive awareness, making situational awareness second nature. And the best part is that they're helpful for everyone from the 7-year-old you're trying to get to be more observant to the 70-year-old who's recently realized it's time to take a more active role in personal security.

THE IDEAL OUTCOME

So what happened in the grocery store? My wife recognized that our situation had changed and that we needed to leave. While I kept my eyes on the individual who seemed out of place, my wife navigated us toward the front of the store. In doing so, we walked around the outside edge of the shopping area rather than taking a direct route to the door.

Never forget that distance is safety. If we had taken the most direct route, it would have brought us close to the individual we were trying to avoid. Instead, we exited the store without issue and without ever directly encountering the odd-seeming individual — the ideal outcome.

Had we been focused on reading labels or been deep in conversation, the situation could have unfolded differently. But because we both understood situational awareness and the meaning of the Color Code, a single word put a preplanned response into motion.

This was made possible through observing, understanding, projecting and trusting our instincts.

STREAMLIGHT
TLR-6 HL®
300 LUMENS
RED OR GREEN LASER AVAILABLE
RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES WITH PORTABLE CHARGING CASE

STREAMLIGHT®
©2025 STREAMLIGHT, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
STREAMLIGHT.COM/TLR-6HL

READY OR NOT

SURVIVING AN ACTIVE-ASSAILANT ATTACK | DAVE YOUNG

When an active assailant attacks, every second truly counts. The FBI has found that most active-shooter incidents end in five minutes or less.[1] Knowing what to do during this short period of time can mean the difference between life and death.

Various programs in the United States teach people how to respond to active-assailant attacks, aiming to maximize safety and survival. While these programs share the common goal of keeping people safe, they differ significantly in their approaches. Some focus on evacuation, others on lockdown and still others on defense. This variety highlights the importance of choosing a program that best prepares individuals for real-world scenarios.

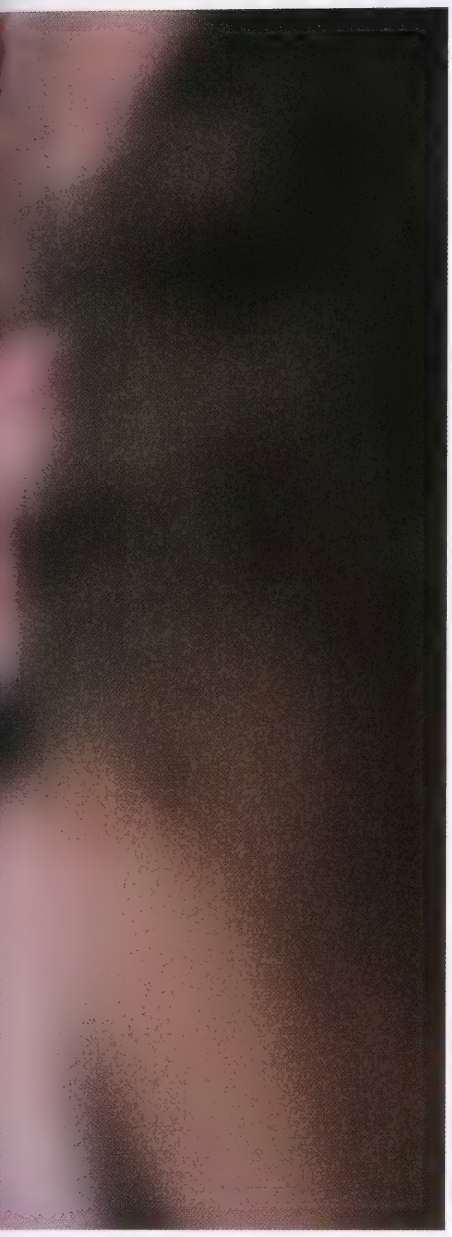
One of my quotes is, "Every round has a training value." Those who have experienced situations in which life and death are real consequences understand this quote. However, I've noticed a lot of people on the firing line living out a *John Wick* fantasy while operating at a *Family Guy* skill level.

EARLY-WARNING SIGNS

Many programs begin only at the start of an attack, focusing solely on what to do when an assailant is already on-site and then providing program participants with theoretical discussions on possible scenarios. My approach goes further. I don't just talk about what might happen; I demonstrate exactly what actions to take and how to execute them.

Recognizing early-warning signs is essential in preventing these kinds of attacks. Research indicates that many rapid mass murders are not entirely spontaneous events but rather the culmination of unresolved conflicts or grievances.

Studies from the FBI and Secret Service reveal that most attackers exhibit warning signs in the days, weeks or even months leading up to an incident. These signals — often overlooked — can include escalating anger, threats



of violence and noticeable behavioral changes. Learning to recognize these patterns can enable intervention before a situation escalates to violence.

For example, a person may exhibit increased aggression, social withdrawal or a fixation on past grievances — sometimes even discussing or posting violent intentions online. Recognizing and addressing these red flags can give schools, workplaces and communities the opportunity to take preventive action through conflict resolution, mental health support and alerting authorities when necessary. The goal is not only to respond once an attack begins but also to build awareness that can prevent an active-assailant attack from ever happening. After all, isn't the best way to block a punch to prevent it from being thrown in the first place?

By learning to identify and respond to early-warning signs, individuals and organizations can help reduce the likelihood of an attack, ultimately creating safer environments for everyone involved.

THE REALITY OF RESPONSE TIMES

Active-assailant incidents often conclude rapidly, frequently before law enforcement can intervene. According to the FBI, the median police response time to an active-shooter event is approximately three minutes — a swift reaction by law enforcement standards.[2] However, many attacks end within this brief window, driving home the critical importance of immediate action by individuals present during such events.

The swift nature of such an attack means relying solely on hiding and awaiting rescue can be perilous. Data indicates that a significant number of active-assailant incidents end before police arrive, often because the attackers are subdued by bystanders or take their own lives. There have also been instances in which school staff intervened or armed private citizens stopped active-shooter situations before law enforcement arrived.

For example, on July 17, 2022, in Greenwood, Indiana, a gunman opened fire in the Greenwood Park Mall's food court, murdering three people and injuring two others. Elisjsha Dicken, a 22-year-old legally armed citizen, engaged the shooter just 15 seconds after the attack began, firing 10 rounds from a distance of 40 yards and hitting the assailant eight times, stopping the attack.[3]

This reality underscores the necessity of proactive measures and preparedness among potential victims. Empowering an individual with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively, such as recognizing escape routes, securing safe barricading locations and, when feasible, confronting the attacker, can significantly enhance his or her chances of survival. Training programs that emphasize these strategies equip people to make informed decisions during the critical moments of a mass-casualty attack, potentially saving lives before law enforcement can take control.

IMMEDIATE AND DECISIVE ACTION

When an active-assailant attack occurs, the immediate actions taken by individuals on the scene can mean the difference between life and death. Time is of the essence, and every second counts.

Responding swiftly and decisively can increase not only your chances of survival but also the safety of those around you. Hesitation, on the other hand, gives the attacker more opportunities to inflict harm and may escalate the danger for everyone in the area.

In such an incident, there are often countless unknowns, creating a highly unpredictable and risky environment for everyone involved. When the first shots are fired, key information is often lacking, including:

- **The Attacker's Plan.** Without knowing what the attacker has planned, you cannot predict his or her next moves. The shooter may have a targeted plan, seeking out specific locations or individuals, or he or she may move randomly. This unpredictability makes it imperative that you react quickly to avoid becoming an easy target.
- **The Number of Attackers.** There may be more than one shooter, but this is rarely clear amid the chaos of an attack. Additional attackers could be strategically positioned in different areas or may attempt to ambush those trying to escape. Acting quickly reduces your chances of being caught off-guard by multiple assailants.
- **The Shooter's or Shooters' Location.** During an active-assailant attack, the shooter's exact location is often unknown or constantly changing. You may hear gunfire but be unable to pinpoint its source, or the shooter may be moving between areas. Taking immediate action helps you to create distance from the threat, which is crucial for survival.

THE THREE P's

Stage 1: Prevention

The best way to stop an active-assailant attack is to prevent it from happening in the first place. This means learning to recognize and manage conflict before it escalates. It's also essential to establish procedures for handling a situation that could lead to violence. By addressing a problem early, you can often prevent it from escalating into a deadly attack.

Stage 2: Preparation

Preparation involves conducting a thorough risk and threat assessment. It's vital to have this assessment performed by experts who have real experience with active-assailant situations rather than just theoretical knowledge.

Some programs advise people to hide and hope the attack ends quickly. If you must choose a hiding place, remember these three key factors:

- It should allow you to see if danger is approaching.
- It should provide a means to defend yourself.
- It should offer an escape route if needed.

If a hiding place does not meet these criteria, it's not safe and could become a death trap.

Stage 3: Practice

Having a plan isn't enough. You need to practice it. As my friend and mentor Gary Klugiewicz says, "Fire drills over fire talks." Practice makes your response automatic.

Take time to learn, understand and practice the steps that can help you stay safe if you truly want to protect yourself and others during such a tragic event. Being prepared and ready to act can make all the difference when every second counts.

Don't worry that preparing for an attack will scare people. In fact, it often makes them feel safer because the preparation will let them know they're ready.

— Dave Young

• **Any Potential Explosives or Hazards.** An attacker may have placed explosives, traps or other hazards in the area to increase casualties or restrict escape routes. With no way of knowing whether such dangers are present, you'll end up heightening your risk by waiting passively. Moving immediately reduces the likelihood that you'll be caught in such a trap if it exists.

• **Fires or Other Threats.** An attacker may use fire or chemical agents to create further chaos. Moving quickly decreases your chances of exposure to these additional hazards. Fires, in particular, can spread rapidly, creating a deadly situation for anyone nearby.

YOU NEED TO MOVE

Given these unknowns, immediate action is essential. If you remain still, such as hiding under a desk or in a closet, you become a stationary target, making it easier for an attacker to locate and harm you. By moving, you make yourself harder to find and hit. Movement forces an attacker to make quick, reactive decisions, making it more difficult for him or her to take precise shots.

Studies and expert analysis show that individuals who take action — whether by running, finding cover and hiding, or defending themselves — tend to have higher survival rates. Moving quickly and creating distance reduces your chances of being hit by gunfire. A stationary target is easy to pinpoint, while a moving target forces a shooter to adjust, often decreasing his or her accuracy.

Moreover, an attacker often expects passive behavior. By taking action, you break that expected pattern, potentially disrupting the shooter's focus and confidence. Fleeing or fighting back can momentarily throw the shooter off-balance, creating an opportunity for you to escape or defend yourself. And taking action, even if it's just moving to a safer location, puts you in a more proactive mental state. This survivor's mindset can help you stay calm, assess risks more clearly and make better decisions as the situation evolves.

WHEN YOU HAVE NO OTHER OPTION

If escaping or barricading is not an option, actively defending yourself may be the best choice. History tells us that those who confront an attacker, even in limited ways, can disrupt the attack and reduce casualties. While engaging an attacker is dangerous, you should keep in mind that studies indicate that attackers often target those who appear passive or vulnerable.

Acting as a hard target can make a significant difference. When you've exhausted all other options, defending yourself can be a last line of survival. Attackers are often unprepared for resistance, and some may flee or become disoriented when they're confronted by it.

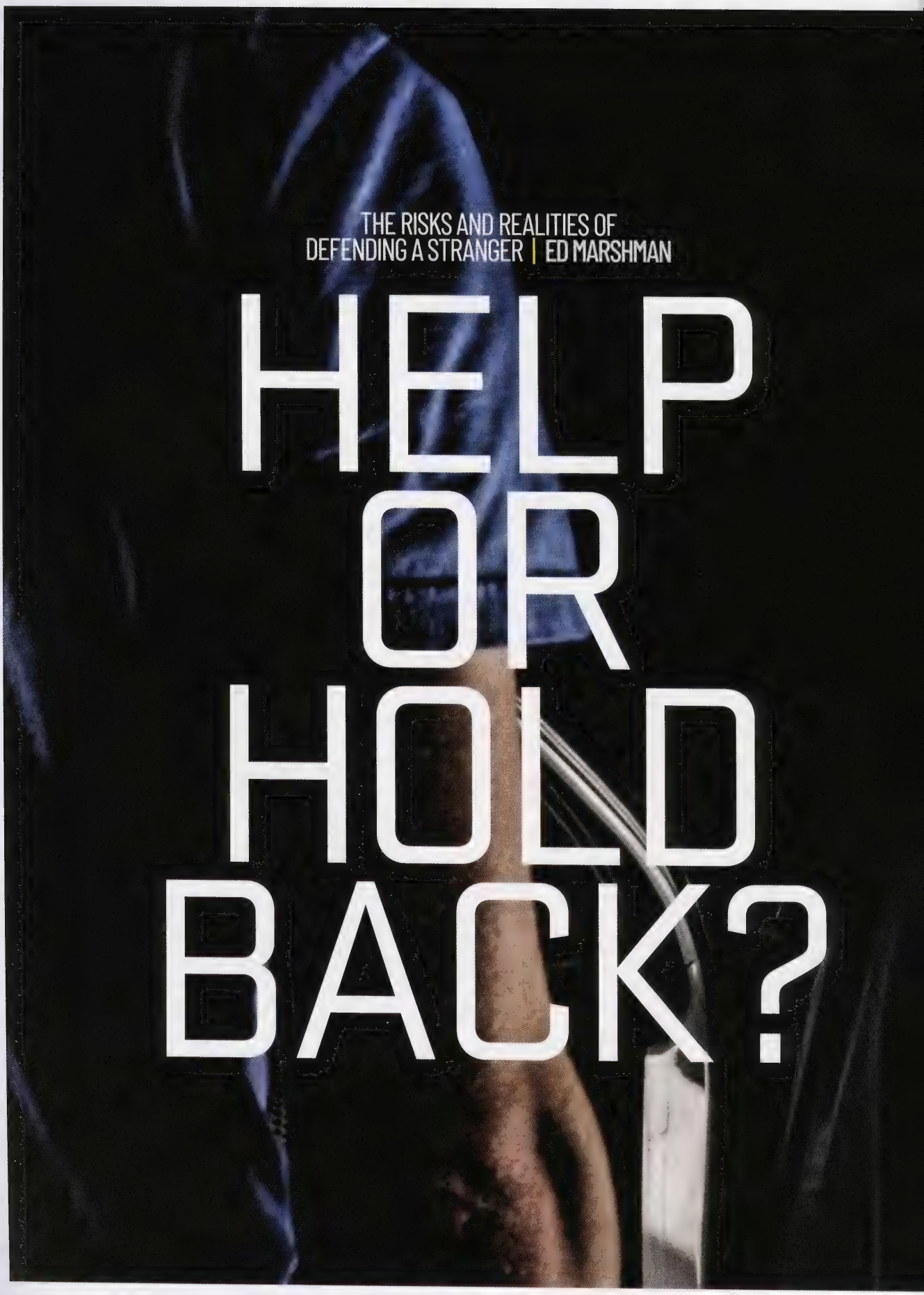
INCREASE YOUR CHANCES

When you're faced with an active-assailant attack, taking action is not just a choice but also often a necessity. The unknown factors, combined with the reality that law enforcement may take several minutes to arrive, make having a plan critical. Whether it's moving to a safer place, barricading yourself or preparing to defend yourself, each action increases your chances of survival. In such a situation, preparation and decisive action are your best defenses against becoming another statistic.

ENDNOTES

(1) A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013 *(Washington, D.C: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013), 8, FBI.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view.* **(2)** *J. Pete Blair, M. Hunter Martaindale and Terry Nichols, "Active Shooter Events from 2000 to 2012,"* FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, *Jan. 7, 2014, LEB.FBI.gov/articles/featured-articles/active-shooter-events-from-2000-to-2012.* **(3)** *"Greenwood Park Mall mass shooting: 1 year later," WTHR.com, last updated Jan. 3, 2024, WTHR.com/article/news/special-reports/greenwood-mall-mass-shooting/greenwood-park-mall-shooting-one-year-indiana-elisjsha-dicken-investigation-timeline-victims-suspect/531-6cb02854-7bff-4167-8be5-91adb8ebf4e8.*

CARRY
WHAT
DEFINES
YOU
P365
AXG LEGION
Like all pistols in the LEGION family, the new P365-AXG LEGION embodies what its owners stand for and expect. Quality, innovation and performance. Featuring our first ever all-metal AXG grip module for the P365 and fitted with custom LEGION G10 grip panels, paired with an optics-ready slide that features SIG SAUER'S patent-pending integrated expansion chamber for recoil reduction, and an extended magwell for faster reloads. The P365-AXG LEGION has XRAY3 Day/Night sights and is finished in the signature LEGION Gray Cerakote Elite finish.
THE NEW P365-AXG LEGION. CARRY WHAT DEFINES YOU.
SIGSAUER
SIGSAUER.COM



THE RISKS AND REALITIES OF DEFENDING A STRANGER | ED MARSHMAN

HELP OR HOLD BACK?

The primary reason concealed carriers carry concealed is to defend themselves and their families, though a topic that regularly comes up is defending third parties who are not family members. The decision to intervene in a situation in which you would be defending a third party is more nuanced than you might think and carries potentially dire consequences that you may not fully realize or appreciate.

CAN YOU LEGALLY INTERVENE?

Let's start with a hypothetical scenario. You pull into the parking lot of your local big-box store. As you exit your vehicle, you hear a woman yelling, "Help! He's attacking me!"

You look two parking rows over and see a 6-foot-2, 230-pound male in a physical struggle with a 5-foot-1, 110-pound female.

What do you do? Most people want to help an innocent victim, and their first instinct may be to intervene. However, if you decide to intervene — especially if you use or threaten physical force — what are the potential consequences?

You need to start by asking yourself if you can legally intervene to defend a third party. As always, you must check the laws and statutes of the jurisdiction in which you find yourself.

Here in Alabama, Statute 13A-3-23, "Use of Force in Defense of a Person," specifically allows an individual to "defend himself or herself or a third person." While this statute clearly allows you to defend a third party, there's more to consider. Your defense — whether of yourself or a third person — must be in response to the "imminent use of unlawful physical force by that other person."[1]

This is one of the major problems in defending a third person. If you did not witness the start of the incident and don't know all of the details, your intervention may not be legal, as the force being used against the third party may not be unlawful. And in the hypothetical scenario mentioned above, it isn't clear what started the incident or whether the man's use of force is lawful or unlawful.

Let's assume you decide to intervene to protect the woman. You draw your sidearm because you don't want to get into a physical struggle with the larger man. As soon as you tell the man to step back and leave her alone, you suddenly learn that he's an off-duty police officer attempting to arrest the woman for shoplifting.

Now you have unknowingly drawn a firearm on a police officer attempting to make a lawful arrest. In doing so, you have threatened a police officer with a firearm.

BUT SHOULD YOU?

Once you answer the legal question of whether you can intervene to defend a third party, you must then consider whether you should. Just because the law allows you to do something doesn't mean doing it would be the right choice.

Before stepping in, you need to analyze the moral and ethical implications as well as the financial and tactical realities. This can be a tough decision, because most people want to do the right thing and protect innocent victims. But before you understand anything else, you need to understand that you are not a law enforcement officer.

For 32 years, as a law enforcement officer, I carried a badge along with my firearm, and my default position was to intervene and stop crimes in progress. Now that I'm retired, the rules are different, and I have had to change my outlook.

As a private citizen, you have no duty to intervene. You do not have the same legal protections as law enforcement officers. Your response options are also more limited than those available to officers.

Before you make the decision to intervene, you also need to weigh the benefits against the potential costs. This may seem coldhearted, but it is reality. If you use force against someone, you will likely enter the legal system, and the best-case scenario is that law enforcement interviews you and that's the end of it.

But if the situation goes beyond a simple interview and you are arrested, you are now facing potential incarceration. Even if you don't get convicted, you will incur substantial legal fees. And that is just on the criminal side. There are also potential civil-lawsuit ramifications, which tend to drag on for years and also cost a lot of money.

The heavier reality with all of these issues, in my mind, is that they don't just impact me — they impact my family too. If you are the breadwinner and get incarcerated, who provides for your family? If you incur substantial financial liability, how does that affect your spouse, children or other dependents? If you decide to intervene in defense of a third party, remember that your family is also being exposed to significant risk. Your decision must consider the potential harm your actions could cause them.

You may already have the benefit of self-defense liability insurance. That's great. However, having insurance should not influence your decision to intervene. I have had students tell me it's OK to intervene because they are insured. Even if the insurance eventually covers most or all of the financial costs, there will still be many other potential issues and consequences.

You don't drive differently just because you have auto insurance, and you don't neglect fire safety in your home just because you have home insurance. Tactically, there are many inherent risks if you intervene. If the intervention results in gunfire, there is always a chance you will be injured or killed. The only gunfight I can guarantee you won't lose is the one you don't get into. Even if you're tactically superior and have better firearms skills than your opponent, luck can still play a role — and you could still lose.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Given all of the negatives of intervening to defend a stranger in a situation about which you don't know all the facts, your decision should lean toward refraining from intervention. So, what can or should you do if you witness a third party being assaulted and want to help? Although each situation will be different, some general guidelines can be planned out in advance.

First, call 911 immediately. The sooner law enforcement arrives, the sooner you are out of the situation.

Second, any actions you take should be as safe as possible. In the hypothetical situation mentioned earlier, you should not approach the aggressor. Keep your distance and stay behind cover and concealment as much as possible. You should be far enough away that the aggressor cannot reach you with his hands, a knife or a club. Yell at the aggressor, telling him to get away from the woman, that you have

called 911 and that the police are on the way. Be prepared to leave the area if the aggressor moves away from the victim and toward you.

When I present this scenario in my concealed carry classes, I often ask students whether they would draw their sidearms. The answer is generally "no." Drawing a firearm escalates the situation, and since you don't know the whole story, it's better to keep your firearm concealed. In addition, drawing a firearm and pointing it at someone may violate criminal statutes, depending on what the circumstances end up being.

If you decide to approach the aggressor, this is a good time to have a less-lethal option, such as pepper spray, at the ready. Be especially wary of others, as you do not know who is who; some bystanders may be associates of the aggressor.

The victim may have sustained some injuries by the time the incident concludes. What should your emotional response be, especially if you find yourself thinking, "I should have done more or been more aggressive?"

Your response should be to avoid mentally beating yourself up. You do not have a duty to save the world, and your actions in such a situation must balance your safety with the victim's safety. The important thing is that you did something. Just as police officers, firefighters and EMTs have learned that they cannot save everyone, you must be content with the fact that you did what was reasonable to assist the victim.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE
Edged weapons are common in the criminal world. Ensure that you do not get close enough for an assailant to harm you.

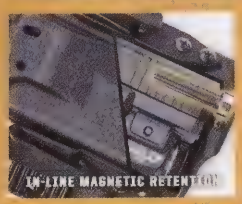
A CALCULATED RESPONSE

Obviously, your response will be different if you are part of a church security team or if you come upon a uniformed police officer on the ground being attacked by aggressors. However, in general, when you're carrying a concealed firearm, you should adopt a basic philosophy of trying to avoid and escape and defending only if absolutely necessary. If you decide to intervene to defend a third party, make that decision knowing that there are numerous risks to you and your family. And do so in the safest manner possible for yourself.

ENDNOTES

(1) *Alabama Code Section 13A-3-23.*

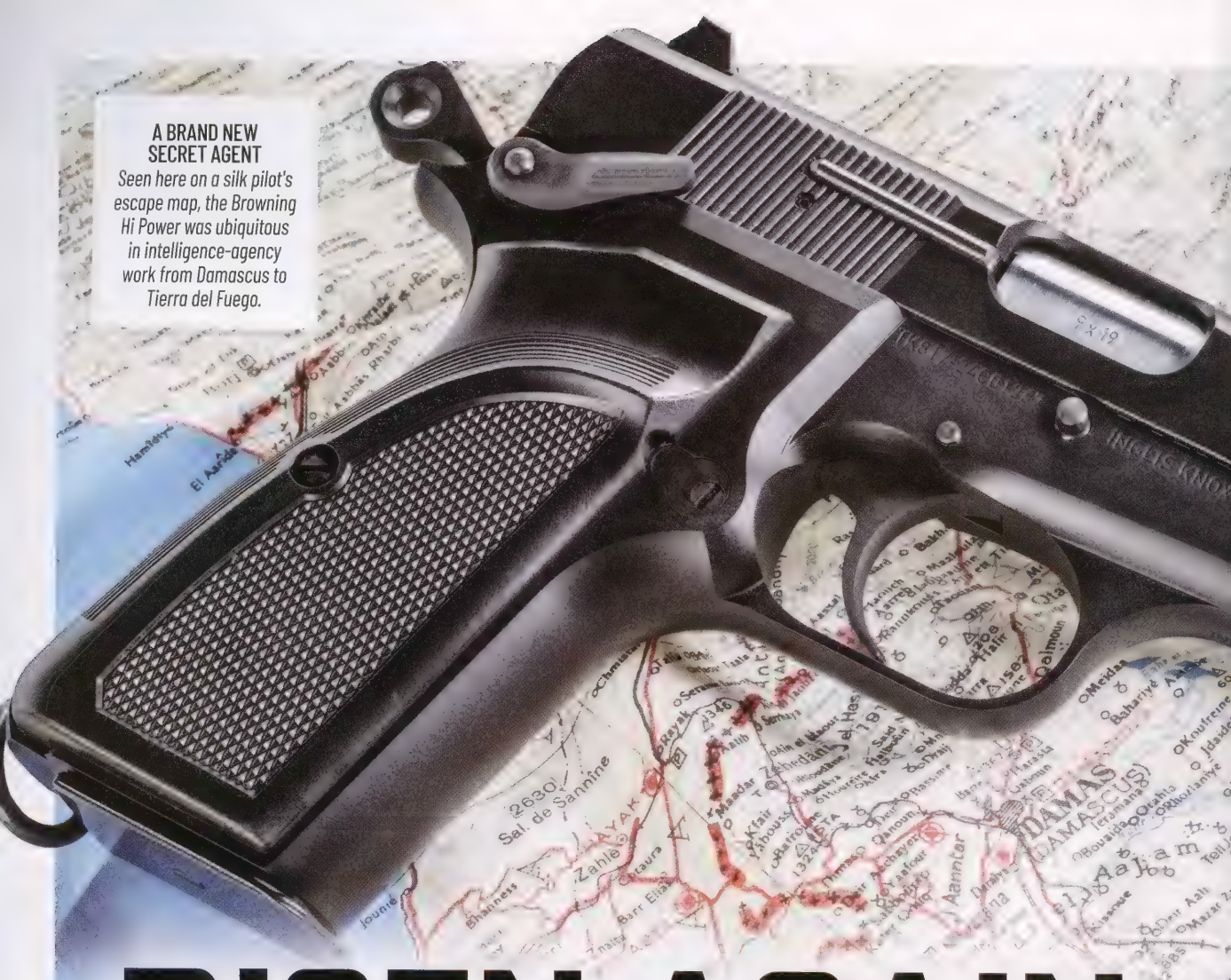
11 POUNDS
OF PULL.
ZERO POUNDS
OF WORRY.



MFT PRO SERIES HOLSTER

LEARN MORE ABOUT
PRO SERIES HOLSTERS
SCAN QR CODE / MISSIONFIRSTTACTICAL.COM

MISSION FIRST TACTICAL



A BRAND NEW SECRET AGENT
Seen here on a silk pilot's escape map, the Browning Hi Power was ubiquitous in intelligence-agency work from Damascus to Tierra del Fuego.

RISEN AGAIN

MILITARY ARMAMENT CORPORATION INGLIS L9A1 | NICK JACOBELLIS

One of the most iconic pistols to serve both military and law enforcement circles and the legally armed public is the 9mm Browning Hi Power.

Since its introduction, this pistol has been praised for its flawless reliability, accuracy, standard 13-round magazine capacity and sleek, concealment-friendly design.[1]

My personal familiarity with Hi Powers dates back to my career with the U.S. Customs Service, when I was issued an original 9mm Belgium-made pistol along with an ample supply of 13-round magazines. I liked my government-issued Hi Power so much that I purchased a pair of 9mm Mark III models when they became available in the late 1980s.

In 2018, Browning announced that the famous Hi Power would no longer be produced. The reaction to this troubling news led to a resurgence in the pistol's popularity. And if one firearms manufacturer can be credited with producing a superb 21st-century retro version of the L9A1, it has to be Military Armament Corporation.

SAIVE'S HI POWER

While John Browning is credited with producing the original design of the now-famous Hi Power, the final version of the P-35/HP-35 was completed by Fabrique Nationale Herstal engineer Dieudonné Saive. It should also be noted that while Browning was a proponent of using a single-column magazine, Saive was the one who pioneered the higher-capacity double-stack magazine.

When World War II broke out in Europe, Saive fled from Belgium to England. Eventually, John Inglis and Company in Canada recruited Saive and fellow Belgian engineer René Laloux to assist with the production of a Canadian version of the Hi Power.

While thousands of Hi Powers were manufactured under German occupation, a significant number were also issued to British and Commonwealth forces as well as to their Chinese allies.[2]

MILITARY ARMAMENT CORPORATION

INGLIS L9A1

CALIBER | 9MM
CAPACITY | 15(+1) ROUNDS
RIFLING | 1:10 RIGHT-HAND TWIST
TRIGGER WEIGHT | APPROXIMATELY 7 POUNDS
FRONT AND REAR SIGHTS | BLACK BROWNING DOVETAIL PATTERN
BARREL LENGTH | 4.7 INCHES
BARREL MATERIAL | FORGED AND MACHINED 4140 STEEL
BARREL FINISH | HARD CHROME
FRAME AND SLIDE MATERIAL | FORGED 4140 CARBON STEEL
FINISH | BLACK CERAKOTE
GRIP MATERIAL | BLACK CHECKERED POLYMER
WEIGHT | 31 OUNCES
MSRP | $489.99

After the war, the single-action 9mm Hi Power continued to serve as a military sidearm in a large number of nations. L9A1 became the post-1960s designation for the Hi Powers used by British and Commonwealth forces until they were replaced by the SIG Sauer P226 and the Glock 17. And during the Cold War, when "plausible deniability" was the name of the game, the 9mm Hi Power was a favored personal-defense weapon among American CIA officers.

As revolutionary as the original Browning design was, it had a few shortcomings when it was used by armed professionals and private citizens. The original flat-latch safety was not easy to raise or lower. The low-profile fixed iron sights, modeled after the Government Model 1911's, were also difficult to use.

In contrast, the Mark III Hi Power featured several major improvements. It was equipped with one of the best-designed extended ambidextrous safeties in the firearms industry. (The original Hi Power also came from the factory with an easy-to-remove magazine disconnect.) The three-dot sights with white inserts were significantly more user-friendly than the original P-35 sights. A mil-spec-style black epoxy finish provided excellent corrosion resistance. Even though the Mark III that I currently own was assembled in Portugal, it performs just as well as my 100 percent Belgium-made Hi Power. Over the years, I have transitioned away from using my original Hi Power magazines and now rely exclusively on higher-capacity Mec-Gars.

FEATURES

The Turkish-made Inglis L9A1 variant emulates the upgraded features of the Mark III design and provides the user with iron sights with white inserts and an excellent set of ambidextrous safeties.

Instead of the corrosion-resistant black epoxy finish applied to the Mark III variants, the L9A1 is manufactured using forged-metal components that receive a super-corrosion-resistant black Cerakote finish. The pistol is equipped with a 4.7-inch, 1:10 right-hand twist, button-rifled barrel installed into the handgun and finished in hard chrome.

"Hammer bite" can be problematic on a Hi Power and is caused by its traditional spur hammer. However, this should not be a concern for those using L9A1-style Hi Powers. The L9A1 is fitted with a more user-friendly Commander-style ring hammer.

Like the L9A1 and Mark III Hi Powers, the Military Armament Corporation L9A1 is also equipped with a two-piece set of checkered polymer grip scales and a circular lanyard ring. This lanyard ring is positioned on the bottom-left side of the grip portion of the frame and can be easily removed.

The L9A1 I requested to evaluate is an excellent rendition of the mil-spec Hi Powers carried by British and Commonwealth personnel from the 1960s through the first 12 years of the Global War on Terrorism.

Military Armament Corporation offers four other versions of the Hi Power:

- The **P-35B** features a black Cerakote finish, Turkish walnut grips and a green fiber-optic front sight.
- The **P-35B BB** features a black Cerakote finish, Turkish walnut grips and a brass-bead front sight.
- The **P-35N** features an electroless nickel finish with G10 grip scales.
- The **GP-35** features a color case-hardened finish with Turkish walnut grip scales.

'BUT HOW'S IT SHOOT?'

While assessing the L9A1, I used a black leather DeSantis paddle holster with a thumb break. To transport a spare 15-round L9A1 magazine, I relied on a DeSantis leather magazine pouch.

For carrying any Hi Power variant concealed, I prefer a DeSantis inside-the-pants leather holster featuring a thumb break and a metal clip. Both of my DeSantis holsters for Hi Powers are decades old yet remain 100 percent serviceable. I would encourage you to consider a DeSantis holster for whichever model pistol or revolver you carry.

When it's paired with the right holster, the L9A1 is one of the easiest full-sized, all-steel service pistols to carry concealed. This is largely due to the thin contour of its slide and its ergonomic grip frame.

THE L9A1 PROVED TO BE A HIGHLY ACCURATE SERVICE PISTOL.

NO 'BOATING ACCIDENTS'
The Mil-Spec L9A1 ships with a removable lanyard ring. While it can seem a cumbersome addition to a carry pistol, a lanyard becomes an important consideration if you will be carrying on water.

Since life is all about trade-offs, the all-steel construction of the L9A1 helps tame recoil but also makes it a 31-ounce pistol, even before you add 16 rounds of 9mm ammunition. (The handgun comes with two OEM Sabatti 15-rounders.) For comparison, an all-steel 9mm Government Model 1911 with an unloaded 10-round magazine weighs 38 ounces.

Personally, I'd like to see Military Armament Corporation offer an L9A1 with an aluminum frame. Given that a Commander-sized 1911 such as the aluminum-frame Tisas Aviator remains a soft-shooting pistol, an L9A1 with an alloy frame would offer similar shootability while being lighter to carry.

I put the L9A1 through its paces using the factory 15-round, Italian-made magazines. Just like the Belgium-made Hi Powers I have been issued and own, the L9A1 proved to be a highly accurate service pistol. It functioned flawlessly not only with 124-grain Federal full metal jacket ammo but also with a range of premium defensive loads, including 147-grain Winchester Silvertip hollow-points, 147-grain Winchester Ranger Bonded hollow-points, 124-grain Federal HST hollow-points and 135-grain Hornady Critical Defense hollow-points.

RETRO FIREPOWER

Even in an era in which striker-fired pistols reign supreme, the Inglis L9A1 from Military Arms Corporation stands out as an exceptional addition to any personal-defense lineup. Without a doubt, the highest compliment I can pay to this well-executed retro version of the famous mil-spec L9A1 is that it honors the legacy of a pistol that served with great distinction for decades in both war and peace.

ENDNOTES

(1) *Recently manufactured Hi Power variants come equipped with 15- and 17-round magazines.* **(2)** *Tactical Life Staff, "Mapping the Course of Canada's Inglis Hi Power Pistols," Athlon Outdoors, July 20, 2018, AthlonOutdoors.com/article/inglis-hi-power-pistols.*

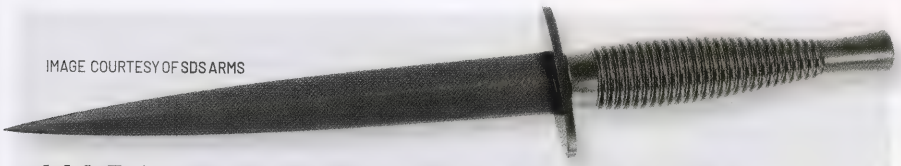


IMAGE COURTESY OF SDS ARMS

MAC INGLIS FAIRBAIRN-SYKES KNIFE

■ In addition to the L9A1 and its other variants based on the vintage design, Military Armament Corporation also offers a meticulously crafted reproduction of the legendary World War II Fairbairn-Sykes (F-S) fighting knife. The design combines historical accuracy with modern craftsmanship, retaining the knife's signature sleek and slender double-edged blade. The blade is tapered from 440A stainless steel and plated with black titanium to resist corrosion and enhance strength and durability. The grip is made from a durable, textured synthetic material that provides a non-slip surface. The MSRP is $99.99.

While Michael Janich explains that daggers do have some advantages — such as their twin edges — their disadvantages far outweigh those benefits when it comes to practicality for self-defense. State laws are often vague and lack clear parameters, particularly when prohibiting "daggers" or knives purposely designed as weapons rather than tools. Janich notes that, functionally, a dagger is a poor choice as a cutting tool — both in terms of utility and safety. He advises sticking with a single-edged self-defense knife (see "Double-Edged Dilemma," October 2024 issue, Page 114).

But if you desire a historical replica to hold in your hand or to display, the Military Armament Corporation Inglis Fairbairn-Sykes Knife is available for a good price.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor

SOURCES

DeSantis Gunhide: DeSantisHolster.com
Mec-Gar USA Inc.: Mec-Gar.com
Military Armament Corporation: MilArmamentCorp.com

USCCA
U.S. Concealed Carry Association For Saving Lives
ACTION FUND
DID YOU HEAR WHAT PRESIDENT TRUMP SAID?
He has committed to signing concealed carry reciprocity, ensuring your 2A rights won't disappear across state lines.
Do you agree with this move?
SIGN THE PETITION NOW TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
PRESIDENT TRUMP'S MESSAGE FOR YOU!
WWW.USCCAACTIONFUND.ORG | PRIVACY POLICY
PAID FOR BY THE U.S. CONCEALED CARRY ASSOCIATION FOR SAVING LIVES ACTION FUND. NOT AUTHORIZED BY ANY CANDIDATE OR CANDIDATE'S COMMITTEE.

THE 'GRAY MAN' PARADOX

BLENDING IN WHILE PROJECTING CONFIDENCE

| JOEL T. NADLER

When it comes to being prepared, you often must rationally examine and balance competing goals. Many of these goals contradict with one another. Take being well-armed and keeping your armaments well-concealed, two objectives that, at times, may be at odds.

The goal of carrying is to be prepared for the widest range of potential threats. While many self-defense scenarios can be handled with a smaller firearm with limited capacity, a larger firearm with greater capacity provides greater preparedness for a broader range of threats.

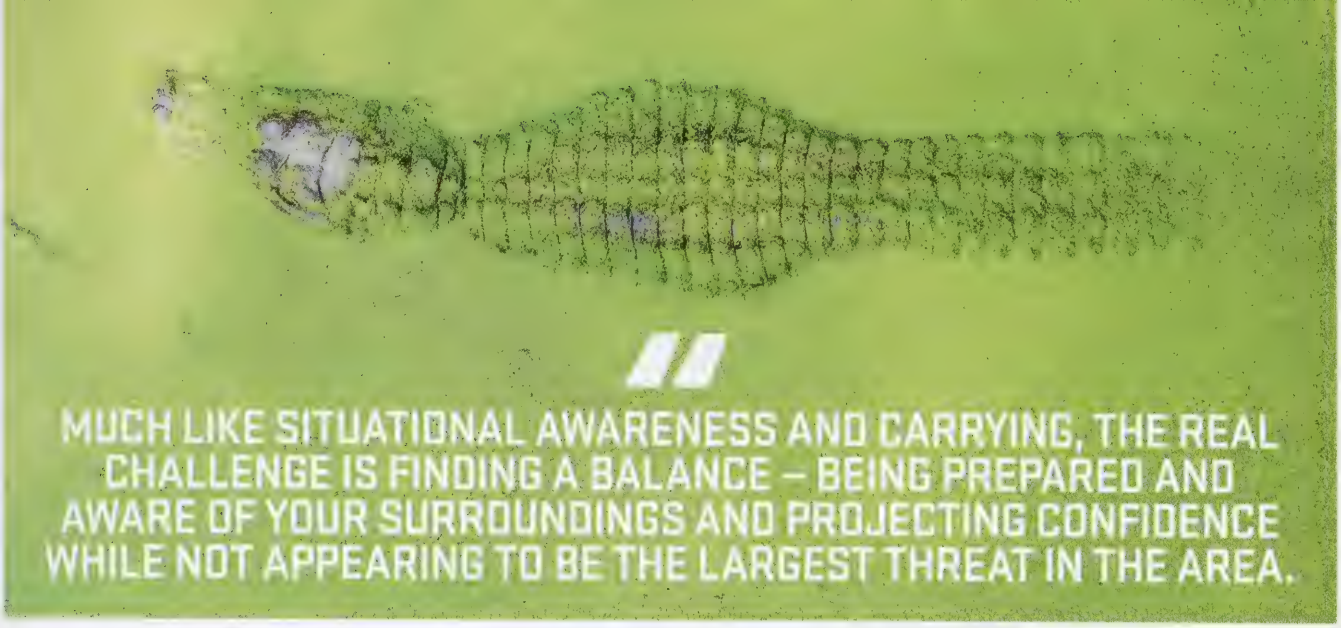
The object of concealment, on the other hand, is to prevent others from noticing that you are armed. This is often easier when you're carrying a smaller firearm, even if it might not seem like "enough gun" to cover all potential possibilities. When you're faced with such competing objectives, you must find your own balance between carrying capacity and concealment.

An often-suggested enhancement to the general practice of concealment for someone who carries is to embrace the "gray man" philosophy — blending in to avoid drawing attention.

GIVE AND TAKE

The idea behind becoming a gray man (or woman) is to blend in rather than stand out as armed. This concept is often integrated into a self-defense and emergency-preparedness mindset, reminding you that you should possess the skills and tools needed to survive a potentially dangerous situation while avoiding being recognized as someone who is likely armed. Advice on how to achieve this often includes avoiding tactical clothing, not placing pro-gun stickers on your vehicles and refraining from behavior that draws unnecessary attention.

If you truly focus on not being noticed, several other competing goals may be affected. These might include carrying a firearm, being situationally aware, projecting confidence and communicating your personal politics, to name a few. These goals exist on a continuum ranging from no importance to very important, and because they are contradictory, they must be balanced.



> MUCH LIKE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND CARRYING, THE REAL CHALLENGE IS FINDING A BALANCE – BEING PREPARED AND AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND PROJECTING CONFIDENCE WHILE NOT APPEARING TO BE THE LARGEST THREAT IN THE AREA.

Increasing one may lead to a decrease in another. For example, if making a strong political statement about gun ownership is one of your priorities, it will be much harder for you to maintain a low profile.

Let's examine each of these.

CARRYING A FIREARM

Your right as a private citizen to carry a firearm, though constantly under attack by those who oppose it, has greatly expanded over the past four decades. In 1986, only one state allowed permitless carry. As of the writing of this article, that number has increased to 29 states. During the same period, the number of states banning carry entirely has gone from 16 to zero and the number of "may issue" states has been reduced from 25 to two (Connecticut and Delaware). Though the nuances of these laws still vary by state, there is little question that the practical ability to carry a firearm has greatly improved over the last 40-some years.

With this ability comes personal responsibility, which includes whether to carry openly (where it's allowed), somewhat concealed (covered but noticeable) or fully concealed (inconspicuous). Obviously, if your goal is to become a gray man, this limits you to a firearm that you can fully conceal. While carrying a larger firearm and multiple magazines may prepare you for more eventualities, it will also make it harder for you to fade into the background.

PRACTICING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

In the world of espionage, one essential skill is learning how to be situationally aware while not appearing to be observant of any potential targets or assailants. In this case, the focus is on appearing unaware while keeping tabs on a target.

Situational awareness often involves more than just avoiding detection by a single individual. Instead, it requires thinking about multiple elements in your environment. This includes identifying potential threats, recognizing points of attack, mapping escape routes, locating areas of cover and spotting potential improvised weapons. Though this may sound complex, it becomes a natural and efficient process in most situations with a little practice.

While I regularly scan my surroundings, I sometimes encounter someone doing the same thing. I'm generally pleased to see others taking this simple step to protect themselves. However, I recognize that someone well-versed in situational awareness may be reducing his or her effectiveness as a gray man.

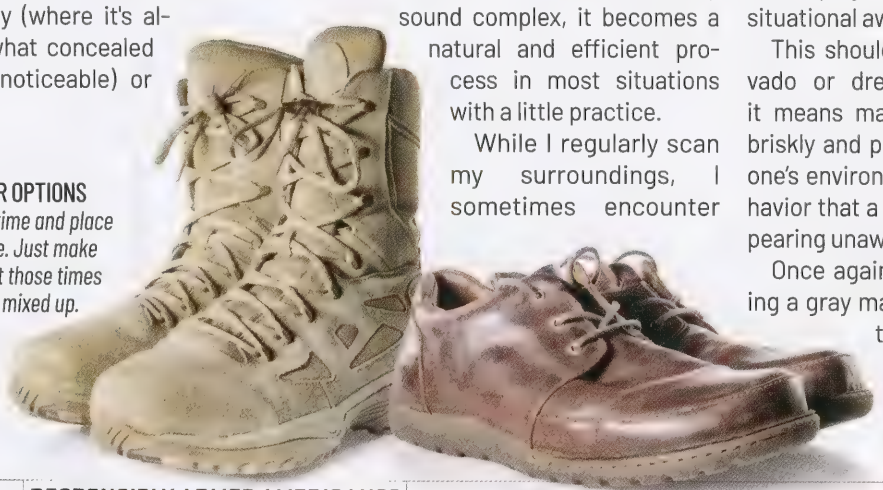
Fortunately, most criminals are not actively looking for such signs. However, being situationally aware can easily be a giveaway; a signal that the situationally aware individual in question is not someone to be ignored. And the goal of being a gray man is the opposite: to be ignored.

PROJECTING CONFIDENCE

Most estimates of individuals successfully using firearms in self-defense indicate that the majority of these incidents do not result in firearms being discharged. Additionally, interviews with criminals who'd repeatedly targeted others showed that they avoid individuals who appear prepared and willing to resist. Because of this, instructors often teach projecting confidence alongside situational awareness.

This should not be mistaken for bravado or dressing "tactically." Instead, it means making eye contact, walking briskly and purposefully, being aware of one's environment, and avoiding any behavior that a criminal seeks, such as appearing unaware, timid or distracted.

Once again, the goal of truly becoming a gray man may be contradictory to the goal of projecting confidence. While projecting confidence can reduce your chances of being



WEIGH YOUR OPTIONS
There will be a time and place for every style. Just make sure not to get those times and places mixed up.

targeted, it can also make it harder for you to blend into the crowd.

Much like situational awareness and carrying, the real challenge is finding a balance — being prepared and aware of your surroundings and projecting confidence while not appearing to be the largest threat in the area. Like many goals, this is easier said than done.

BROADCASTING POLITICS

The last competing factor I want to examine is the contradictory relationship between being a gray man and being a publicly vocal Second Amendment advocate.

Like many people of a certain age, I attended a rural high school, where rifles and shotguns used for hunting were a common sight in the parking lot. Times have changed, but if one of your goals includes announcing your support for firearms ownership and concealed carry, this objective is in direct contradiction to the gray-man concept. Be it putting pro-gun stickers on your vehicle or openly carrying a firearm, making your political stance known inherently compromises your ability to fade into the background.

'BEGIN SCENARIO'

Imagine two individuals arriving at a chain restaurant for lunch. Both are similarly armed and trained.

The first individual arrives in a vehicle with a prominent NRA sticker. He's wearing a T-shirt and an open button-up shirt, which somewhat conceals a Glock 43 in an outside-the-waistband holster. His ball cap, which sports a firearms manufacturer's logo, further reinforces his identity as a gun owner. As he enters the building, he clearly scans the establishment, making eye contact with those who look up, and asks to be seated at a table in the far back, near the door to the kitchen. He walks with purpose and continues to keep his eyes up as he orders.

Conversely, the second individual arrives in a vehicle with no stickers. He's dressed in slacks and a closed button-up shirt, fully concealing a Glock 43 in an inside-the-waistband holster. He isn't wearing a hat or any gun-branded clothing, making him less identifiable as an armed individual. Though he makes mental notes of the environment, he doesn't make his scanning obvious and accepts the seat offered, though he may subtly position himself to better monitor the establishment and be able to move if needed. He remains aware but keeps his observations low-key, avoiding direct eye contact with others.

In this scenario, if a criminal planning to do harm observes both gun owners as they arrive, who do you think he or she would identify as the primary threat?

This highlights the goal of being a gray man: to remain aware and prepared without communicating your awareness and readiness to most casual observers. However, this approach comes with trade-offs.

The first person in the scenario is projecting confidence, awareness and a strong presence, signaling to potential attackers that he is not an easy target. Assuming both individuals have similar training, the first person is less likely to be targeted here (and in many other scenarios).

In other words, our fictitious criminal may choose to avoid the restaurant altogether while the first person is present. Meanwhile, the second person, who does not outwardly appear armed or prepared, may be present when the criminal — not recognizing the hidden threat this person poses — chooses to strike.

As with all defensive decisions, the key is to make a rational choice between these competing goals and decide which balance best fits your needs.

FINDING A COMPROMISE

It's not just about fading into the crowd. Being a gray man requires balancing non-firearms defensive cues, such as projecting confidence and maintaining situational awareness, with concealment tactics (including clothing) that ensure your firearm remains hidden from view.

You will have your own unique goals and must find a balance that works for your training and skills, not to mention your sense of personal style, level of comfort and specific situation. And though no plan will be "perfect," with a little work, you can blend in with the best of them.

KEEP IT SHARP WITH GATCO SHARPENERS

ESTABLISH A BASELINE

A lot of instructors like to talk about "situational awareness," but few mention that in order to remain situationally aware, you will need to have personal benchmarks for what is and is not normal. Until you do that, being "aware of your situation" will only be so helpful.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

SHARPENING YOUR SITUATIONAL AWARENESS | MICHAEL JANICH

"Awareness" is a term frequently used in the self-defense and tactical worlds. More specifically, it's often expressed as "situational awareness," generally understood as actively paying attention to your surroundings to identify potential dangers or threats.

While this sounds good, it lacks specific guidance on what to look for and how to look for it. It also overlooks some of the deeper aspects of consciousness that can profoundly impact your ability to protect yourself.

If you've ever gone to lunch with a stereotypical gun guy, you've probably seen him jockey for the seat with his back against the wall — leaving no doubt that his favorite color is Condition Yellow. While that mindset has its merits, it's hardly a practical template for the average person to develop good awareness habits. Instead, let's try to take a more orderly approach to achieving that goal.

STAY ON THE BALL
Drug addicts can be some of the most unpredictable threats you may have to face. Think this situation seems silly or unlikely? Think again. Addicted persons often engage in bizarre, violent behavior in order to get money to feed their addictions.

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE OF NORMAL

The first step in recognizing potential threats and signs of danger is establishing a basis for comparison. If you can't actively quantify what "normal" looks like, "abnormal" actions or patterns of behavior won't stand out. With that goal in mind, consider the situational aspects of your environment. The way people behave in a bar or club will be vastly different from the patterns of behavior you'd observe in a supermarket, mall or public park.

Therefore, your first step should be to develop the habit of actively quantifying normalcy in various environments. Some specific factors to consider include:

- Distances people maintain from each other
- Flow and patterns of crowd movement
- General mood and demeanor
- Conversational volume
- Eye contact between individuals
- Modes of dress relative to the weather and temperature
- Presence of bags or other personal items
- Movement and visibility of hands

You should also develop an awareness of how all of these dynamics relate to your presence and movement within an environment. Collectively, these elements create an overall picture of what "normal" looks and feels like in different situations.

Using these normalcy templates as a foundation, you should be able to step into any situation and quickly establish an appropriate observational baseline of normalcy. Actions, behaviors and other visual cues that deviate from this baseline will then quickly stand out.

LEARNING TO SEE TROUBLE COMING

Now that you have a better understanding of how to actively quantify what normal looks like, how do you actively cultivate awareness skills that can protect you from specific danger? In a world filled with cameras, the answer is to watch and methodically analyze real violent incidents.

Between social media channels, video platforms such as YouTube and true-crime television programs, there is a vast trove of CCTV footage, cellphone videos and other recordings that clearly document the brutal reality of street attacks. Some of these videos also capture the buildup to such incidents, including the assailants' behavior in the critical moments before the assaults.

Careful study of these videos will help you identify actions and behavioral patterns that are abnormal and characteristic of predatory behavior. Commonly known as "pre-incident indicators," these actions serve as specific warning signs to watch for in order to stay aware.

As your observational and analytical skills improve, you will begin to associate certain actions with specific types of attacks. By imagining yourself in a victim's shoes, you can also identify potentially preventable mistakes or alternative courses of action that he or she might have taken. The goal isn't to Monday-morning-quarterback the victim but rather to develop your ability to recognize the dangers that he or she, unfortunately, did not.

When you're analyzing such a video, pay close attention to the environment and how it might have been used to the victim's advantage to alter the outcome. Specifically, look for smarter alternate routes of travel, escape routes, obstacles, sources of cover and concealment, and objects that could have been used as improvised weapons.

As much as possible, try to picture yourself in that situation. While it's useful to imagine how you might defend yourself against the attack, focus instead on what you could do to recognize the threat, avoid it or prevent it by changing the dynamics of the situation.

'WARGAMING' IN THE REAL WORLD

Once you have learned to quantify "normal" and have studied and analyzed videos of violent attacks, the next step is to apply your skills in the real world. The best places to start are environments in which you already

spend significant time, such as your workplace, your routes to and from work, and places you frequent, such as your favorite restaurants. Since you habitually spend time in these locations and are familiar with them, it makes sense to wargame them first.

One of your first courses of action should be to consciously identify the most advantageous locations within these environments. Look for areas that provide good visibility of entrance doors and other approach routes.

Compared to sitting in the middle of a restaurant, positioning yourself with your back against a wall reduces your area of responsibility by 180 degrees. Sitting in a corner reduces it even further, making it easier to observe your surroundings. However, this may also limit your avenues of escape.

Learn to identify at least two easily accessible escape routes, and remember that restaurants almost always have back doors. Atop exits and exit paths, take note of sources of hard cover and their positions relative to the building's doors. Mentally plan your escape, considering how you can move from one point of cover to the next along the way. And while maintaining a clear line of sight of your environment is important, you should also take advantage of reflective surfaces such as mirrors and windows to expand your field of view and cover potential blind spots.

Finally, take stock of objects on the table and in your immediate vicinity that could be used as weapons, shields or projectiles. Ideally, you should be carrying much better weapons on your person as your first line of defense, but actively assessing your environment is an important part of being aware.

Repeat this process continuously in all of the environments you frequent. As you become more skilled at actively assessing each location, your habits will gradually change. You'll likely find a new favorite table at your local restaurant — along with carefully chosen alternates if your first choice isn't available.

That's good, as every time you go through this process in a familiar place, you're strengthening your ability to apply these skills in new and unfamiliar environments. By following this progressive method, you will ultimately be able to adapt your awareness skills — dynamically — no matter where you go.

AWARENESS DOESN'T STOP THERE

So far, this exploration of awareness has focused on maximizing your ability to observe your environment and recognize abnormal or potentially dangerous actions of others. While these are critical building blocks of personal protection, real awareness doesn't stop there.

Situational awareness refers to being actively cognizant of all of the dynamics affecting your personal situation. This deeper understanding has a profound impact on your ability to exercise your options to stay safe.

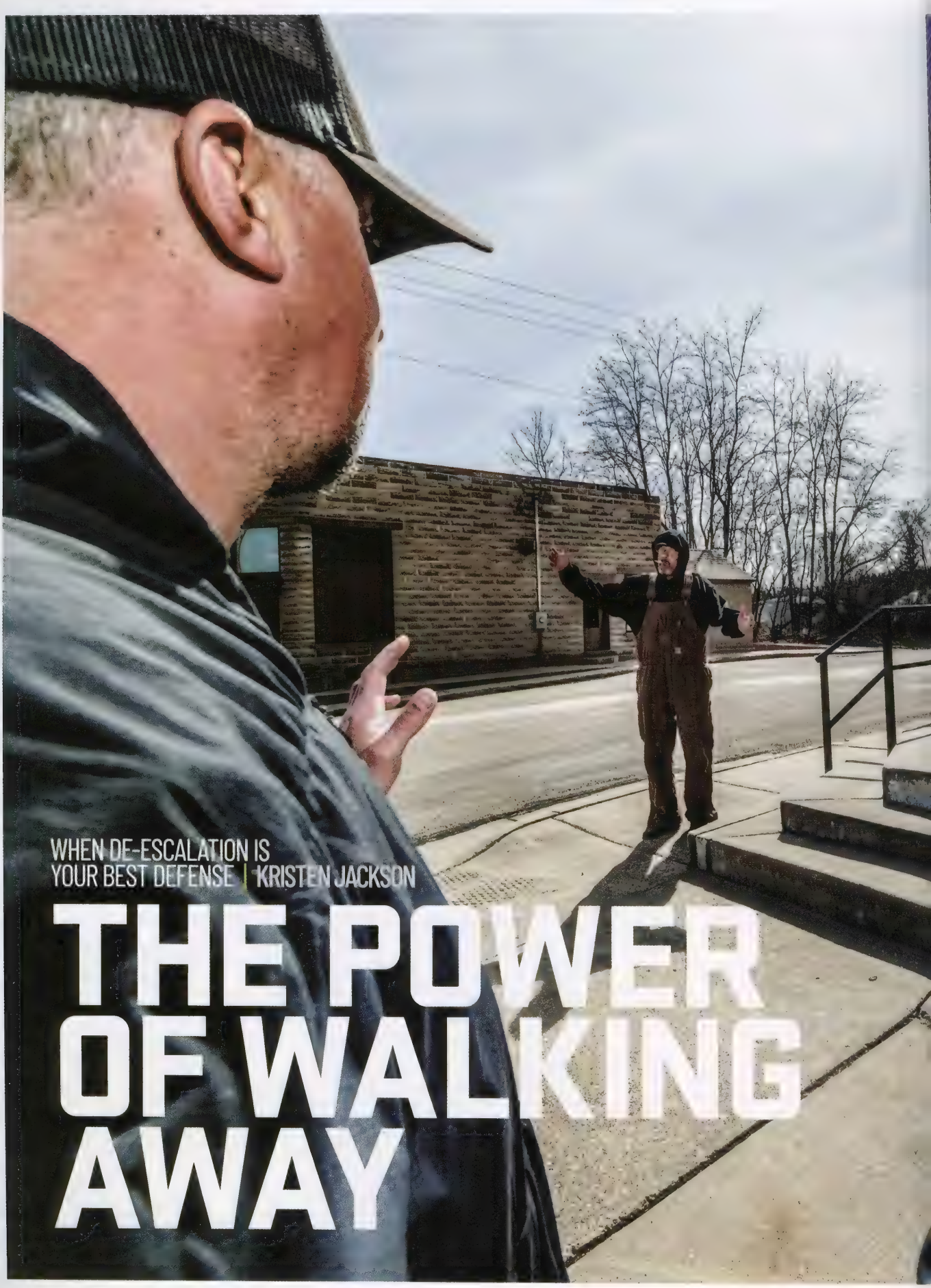
For example, let's say you live in a cold climate. One morning, you wake up to frigid temperatures and a blanket of fresh snow on the ground. To make matters worse, you're not feeling 100 percent and suspect you might be coming down with a cold. Nevertheless, you bundle up appropriately — adding an extra layer or two of clothing and heavy gloves — and then head out the door. As you take your first step onto the driveway, your foot slides, and you realize there's a treacherous layer of ice hidden beneath the snow. From a self-defense perspective, your world has just changed dramatically.

If you were suddenly attacked in that situation, you wouldn't have the traction to run away. If you had to stand and fight using unarmed skills, your footwork and balance would be severely compromised. In addition, the restrictions of your heavy winter clothing would make it difficult for you to strike with power. If the threat were potentially lethal, your ability to draw your pistol would also be hindered; thick gloves and multiple layers of clothing covering your holster would make it difficult for you to achieve a smooth drawstroke.

Obviously, you can manage all of these factors effectively by adapting your skills, tactics and method of carry to cold-weather realities. However, that process begins with being aware of the deeper details of your personal situation.

KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

True awareness is as much about self-awareness as it is about being alert to your surroundings and potential threats. This self-awareness should also include an honest assessment of your skills and abilities. Having a realistic understanding of your true capabilities is one of the most important forms of awareness — and the most powerful catalyst for your training efforts and tactical choices.



WHEN DE-ESCALATION IS YOUR BEST DEFENSE | KRISTEN JACKSON

THE POWER OF WALKING AWAY

TAKE IT EASY
Creating distance, modulating your body language and apologizing are just three of the most important de-escalation tools at your disposal.

Handling a rapidly escalating situation is something with which most gun owners tend to be familiar. That's why we work on our drawstrokes, target acquisition and rapid follow-up shots. We hone our shooting skills for shot placement and distance.

But what about the fights from which you could potentially walk away? What about de-escalation? It's time to take a step back and consider the possibility that there are times when you'd be better served by getting out of a situation without drawing your gun.

WHEN TO DE-ESCALATE

De-escalation is the art of calming down a tense situation. It involves avoiding any action that might exacerbate the conflict, such as running your mouth when you shouldn't or invading someone's personal space. There are several techniques — both verbal and physical — that can help you actively de-escalate a situation. The most effective approach depends on the circumstances and, ultimately, only you can judge what's appropriate in the moment.

Your ability to defuse a volatile encounter and walk away safely hinges on a number of factors. Unfortunately, the most unpredictable one is often the attitude of the person confronting you. If it's someone you don't know, that makes him or her a wild card — and that uncertainty can make the situation even more challenging.

So how do you know if it's possible to calm an angry stranger? There are a few ways to figure that out, although it's important to understand that nothing is foolproof or guaranteed. An angry person can shift without warning, so it's imperative that you stay alert until you are safely away.

Things to look for when you're working to de-escalate include an individual's body language and tone of voice and the environment. You can usually tell if someone is about to attack. He or she might block your path, lean into you, or clench and unclench his or her fists. Eye movement varies. Some assailants might maintain unbreaking eye contact to assert dominance, while others might dart their eyes around to check for witnesses.

Tone of voice requires you to listen for nuances. Someone may raise or lower his or her voice in a way that doesn't fit a casual interaction, signaling potential aggression.

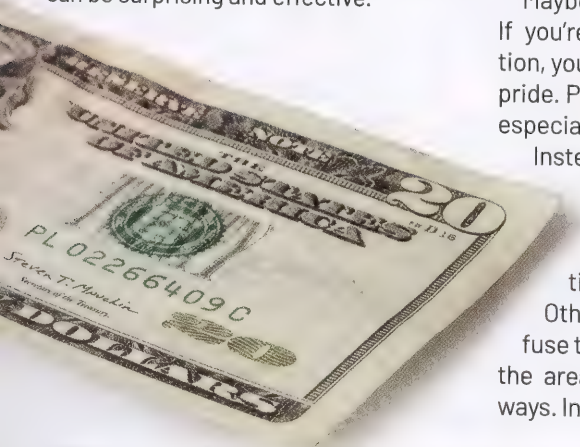
As for environment, that one takes a bit of explaining. The environment you're in when you're facing an attacker matters. Did you break one of John Farnham's "Rules of Stupid" by going somewhere stupid? Are you in a dive bar in a rough part of town? Or are you in the aisle of a local convenience store? Is the person you're facing alone? Or does he or she have friends? The latter can mean he or she won't want to lose face by backing down or that you're up against multiple attackers.

The reality is that you're more likely to encounter trouble in a high-crime location. However, that doesn't mean you can't run into a dangerous situation anywhere — because you can.

There are situations you simply can't de-escalate. Don't risk maiming or death in an attempt to take the passive way out. However, if you believe it's possible to extricate yourself without bloodshed, do so. Just don't ignore the signs that your de-escalation attempts are failing miserably.

HOW TO DE-ESCALATE

A personal favorite de-escalation tactic is the "My Bad 20," a concept coined by the late Jack Clemons. Although Clemons worked in the firearms industry, he also spent time as a bouncer and was well aware of how easily tempers could be diffused with a $20 bill. This tactic requires you to carry cash — specifically a $20 bill — tucked away for a moment when it might be needed. Given how few people carry cash anymore, this tactic can be surprising and effective.



The idea is that if something happens — whether it's an accidentally spilled drink, a "stolen" parking space or some other relatively minor slight — you can hand over the $20 as a gesture of apology. That $20 might replace drinks, buy someone coffee or even just distract him or her for a moment. Isn't walking away from something that could have easily turned ugly worth 20 bucks?

Maybe it isn't a "My Bad 20" situation. If you're attempting verbal de-escalation, you'll probably have to swallow your pride. Placing blame on the aggressor — especially publicly — is not a good idea. Instead, stay calm, keep your voice level, and don't use accusatory or inflammatory statements. It might surprise you, but sometimes a simple apology can work. Other times, you may be able to defuse the situation just enough to leave the area before everything goes sideways. In this scenario, you're the voice of reason, but you're also the one willing to say and do what it takes to end the confrontation without using force.

Physical de-escalation is also an option, but it's a much touchier subject. It involves putting your hands on someone and restraining him or her, which can cause legal problems. Generally speaking, any form of so-called "de-escalation" that requires touching an already angry person is a bad idea. It's risky even if you're trained — and most people aren't truly trained for it.

Being a black belt in karate or training in Brazilian jiu-jitsu twice a week doesn't make you an expert in physical restraint or de-escalation. And if you do manage to restrain someone, you could face serious legal hurdles down the road. You might be charged with unlawful restraint or even kidnapping. Unless there are extreme mitigating circumstances, you should leave physical restraint to law enforcement.

THE CRISIS PREVENTION INSTITUTE

■ The Crisis Prevention Institute Inc. (CPI), established in 1980, specializes in evidence-based de-escalation and crisis-prevention training for service-oriented employees. Based in Milwaukee, with offices in the United Kingdom, Australia, France and the United Arab Emirates, the CPI has trained more than 17 million people across the education, health care, human services, security, behavioral health, dementia care and retail industries.

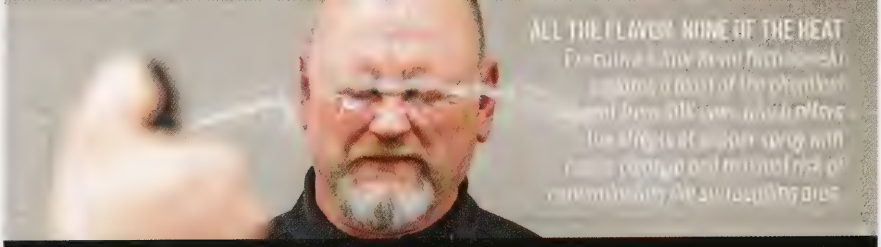
Each episode of the CPI's podcast, *Unrestrained*, features interviews with professionals who discuss how they've applied CPI training in their workplaces. Each episode runs roughly 30 minutes and provides an opportunity for you to learn from others' experiences and integrate their insights into your own conflict de-escalation and conflict-resolution strategies (even if you don't opt for the CPI's paid training). You can access the podcast episodes here: PodNews.net/podcast/i4886/episodes.

The CPI shared a useful blog post listing 10 de-escalation tips based on its nonviolent crisis-intervention training (which can be downloaded as a PDF). Here's a brief overview of the most applicable tips for *CCM*'s readers:

- **Be empathic and nonjudgmental.** Respect and acknowledge the person's feelings without judgment.
- **Respect personal space.** Maintain distance to reduce anxiety and explain your actions if you're entering the individual's personal space.
- **Use nonthreatening nonverbals.** Neutral body language and tone help calm the situation.
- **Keep your emotional brain in check.** Stay calm and professional to positively influence the person's response.
- **Focus on feelings.** Acknowledge and address the person's emotions by using supportive language.
- **Allow silence for reflection.** Sometimes silence allows a person to process a situation and calm down.
- **Permit time for decisions.** Give the person time to think through options to reduce stress and promote calm decision-making.

To learn more about CPI, view its available training opportunities and review other resources that delve into de-escalation training, visit CrisisPrevention.com.

— Frank Jastrzembski, Contributing Editor



DEPLOYING SELF-DEFENSE SPRAY

Yes, the use of a defensive spray is a legitimate way to de-escalate a violent situation. You might think a "spicy treat" would only make things worse, but it can buy you time to escape. And if you can get away with deploying a spray instead of drawing your firearm, that's a win.

Pepper spray shouldn't be your instant go-to, but if it's clear that something must be done and you believe the spray will end the confrontation, you should use it. Just be aware that you'll need to report the situation to law enforcement; you can — and should — do so from a safe location.

— Kristen Jackson

INTERVENING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

The concept of inserting yourself into a confrontation between other people is one of the trickiest in the use-of-force world. People often wonder if they should get involved in a situation they could easily abandon. It's no surprise that many want to help. Before you do, consider the ramifications.

When you insert yourself between two or more angry people, you become the target. Think carefully before putting yourself in a position in which you might be assaulted or forced to use force. If you do end up using force, you'll be questioned as to why you placed yourself in that position. And you'd better have an excellent reason.

If we're talking about friends and family, it's both the same and different. In such a case, you're familiar with those involved — hopefully well enough to know how to calm them down and end things without violence. And no, simply recognizing the barista from your favorite coffee shop doesn't warrant your involvement. Consider intervening only when it involves real friends and family, not casual acquaintances.

Even then, exercise caution before stepping in. It's entirely possible that you could make things worse with a ham-handed attempt to help. Be confident that you know what's really going on and what you're getting into before making yourself the latest member of the disagreement.

If you need a bottom line, it's that you're generally best served by staying out of it, but this is a topic you should study and about which you should make some decisions in advance. In what circumstances can you — or should you — try to de-escalate a situation that doesn't directly involve you? Are there specific factors that come into play? Have you considered the personal and legal ramifications? Take the time to figure that out now — before a problem presents itself.

WINNING WITHOUT A FIGHT

De-escalation takes many forms. Can you simply walk or drive away? Is the threat coming from a car at a red light? And could you de-escalate the situation by just driving off? Are you in a grocery store with someone yelling, "I'm talking to you!" and in a position from which you could back away and exit the building?

Why not do it?

Don't forget that leaving is your superpower. It might bruise your ego or make you abandon a cart of groceries, but it's a small price to pay to avoid something far worse. Any fight from which you walk away is a fight you've won, even if all you did was hand over a $20 bill or apologize even though you weren't in the wrong. Never let your pride stop you from trying to de-escalate rather than exacerbate a situation.

Having no option but to use lethal force is one thing, but using it when it wasn't necessary is a whole other issue. Carry your gun, put some pepper spray in your pocket and go about your day — and most of all, make smart choices.

USCCA

FIXING SHOOTING DEFICIENCIES IN REAL TIME

ON-THE-SPOT CORRECTIONS

ON THE FLY

If you carefully observe students, you will be able to identify errors and address them as they arise.

As a firearms trainer, you face an endless array of scenarios and challenges, including differing types of classes, varying levels of student competency, environmental factors and the time available to deliver the material. All of these elements influence the progression of a student's knowledge and skill development. Working alongside other instructors — whether as a primary or assistant instructor — introduces its own set of challenges in facilitating effective behavioral changes in a student.

It's important to develop techniques that effectively enhance a student's performance by communicating behavioral modification in a way that makes sense and is easy to replicate. This can be achieved through concise suggestions, short intervals of instruction or physical demonstrations. And it can all be done easily and effectively by using a technique known as an "on-the-spot correction."

ADDRESS THE ORDER OF SEVERITY

An on-the-spot correction is an effective tool for fine-tuning a previously learned skill. The concept involves identifying and isolating a single deficiency in a student's performance and then making adjustments to his or her action pattern to correct the issue. This results in an overall improvement in the student's performance as well as the student's experience in your class.

There are several key components to making an on-the-spot correction once you have identified a deficiency in a shooter's performance. A common pitfall for many instructors is struggling to isolate the single most critical issue that needs correction. Some instructors even attempt to fix everything at once, which complicates rather than resolves the problem.

Even when you're working one-on-one with a student, providing too much information can be just as detrimental as providing too little. This can ultimately create more issues to deal with than were present initially. The key is to identify the most significant deficiency and correct it first before addressing the next issue in order of severity. This process should continue until the student's performance reaches or exceeds the expected level.

Time is an important factor, especially when you're working with numerous students or a large class alongside multiple instructors. Ideally, you should deliver an on-the-spot correction in 30 seconds or less. Keep in mind though that focusing on one student for a correction takes time away from the rest of the class. An exception to this is when you capture the attention of the entire class and deliver the correction to everyone without embarrassing the particular student with whom you are working. (Experienced instructors can do this so smoothly that it appears to be a natural part of the lesson.) In a larger class, if one student is struggling with a particular issue, there's a good chance others are experiencing the same difficulty. Addressing the correction broadly can benefit multiple students at once.

IMPLEMENT THE THREE BASIC TENETS OF LEARNING

When it comes to time efficiency, verbal corrections are the most effective, but they must be succinct and logical and follow the three basic tenets of learning — what, why and how — to maximize their impact.

The "what" identifies the specific aspect of a shooter's performance that needs correction. For example, a common correction might involve trigger manipulation. Assuming the muzzle is stable on the target, the shooter must move the trigger to fire the gun without disturbing the alignment of the muzzle and the target. This ensures the intended objective — which is to hit the target — is achieved.

The "why" is simply understanding that the bullet goes wherever the shooter points the muzzle. If the muzzle is aligned with the target when the bullet exits, the shot will hit the target. If the shooter points the muzzle elsewhere, the shot will miss the target. To reliably hit the target, the shooter must pull the trigger while maintaining proper muzzle alignment.

The "how" can be effectively conveyed — assuming the shooter has a solid foundation in shooting fundamentals — by instructing him or her to acquire a familiar sight picture, place the trigger finger on the trigger and, with conscious awareness, visualize pulling the front sight through the window of the rear sight while pressing the trigger until the gun fires. By maintaining the front sight within the rear-sight window while pulling the trigger, the shooter conditions his or her trigger finger to operate the trigger smoothly, minimizing any movement of the muzzle off-target before the gun fires.

With red-dot sights, the process is similar. Simple phrases, such as "Put the dot on the target," "Place your finger on the trigger" and "Visualize smoothly pulling the dot to your eye with the trigger until the gun fires" can reinforce proper technique. Through repetition, a shooter develops the trigger-finger technique and proper pull on the gun he or she needs for consistent hits on any target placed downrange.

UTILIZE PHYSICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

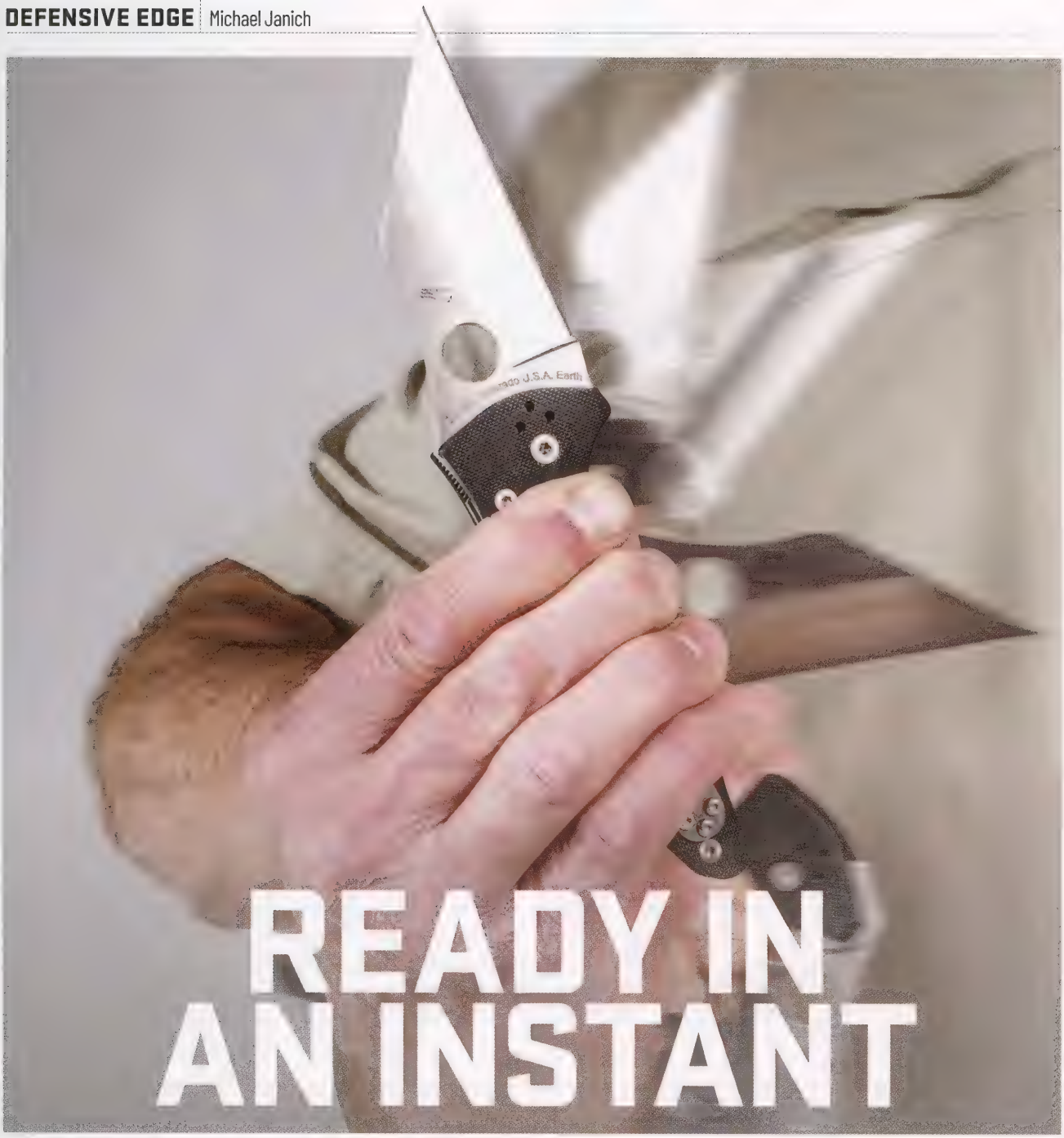
At times, an on-the-spot physical demonstration is the most effectively way to correct a shooter's problem. There are several effective ways to demonstrate proper trigger manipulation, helping the shooter achieve accurate hits on demand.

A classic example involves having the shooter stabilize the gun on the target in the usual manner — with his or her finger off the trigger — while you control the trigger pull. You'll overlay your dominant hand on the shooter's dominant hand and pull the trigger once he or she confirms that the sight picture is correct. This method consistently results in hits on target in the desired location.

An alternative method for physically verifying proper trigger manipulation is to have the shooter place his or her trigger finger on the trigger with minimal pressure. You will then overlay the shooter's hand and apply the necessary pressure to move the trigger, allowing the shooter to experience the complete trigger stroke and understand what a proper trigger press feels like for an accurate shot.

ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF YOUR TRAINING

As a firearms instructor, you must have a deep understanding of the visual, mental and physical aspects of delivering an accurate shot to effectively diagnose and correct deficiencies in a shooter's skill set with minimal time and effort. The benefit of on-the-spot correction is that it provides just enough information to positively impact the student's performance, improving the quality of instruction without disrupting its timing and flow. All firearms instructors should strive to cultivate on-the-spot corrective techniques to enhance the quality of their training. Such techniques not only improve an individual student's experience but also improve how the entire class is taught.



READY IN AN INSTANT

ONE-HANDED FOLDING-KNIFE DEPLOYMENT

Carrying a folding knife for personal defense is a conscious compromise. Compared to a fixed blade, a folder is not only structurally weaker but also typically slower to deploy. While a fixed-blade knife is ready to cut and thrust the moment it clears its sheath, a folder must be drawn and then opened before it becomes fully functional as a defensive weapon. The fact that a knife is viable only against contact-distance threats makes deploying a folder even more challenging, as it requires you to do so at close range and in extreme haste.

As with any defensive weapon, simply carrying a folding knife isn't enough. Your carry strategy must allow for immediate access, your drawstroke must be swift and decisive, and you must have the skill to open your knife quickly and reliably.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF RUNNING OUT OF THUMB BEFORE THE BLADE OPENS FULLY, REVERSE ENGINEER YOUR INITIAL GRIP.

CARRY LOCATION AND DRAWSTROKE

Deploying a folding knife starts with a consistent carry position that allows you to access it immediately. This should enable you to draw the knife swiftly and positively and — very importantly — achieve the secure, preliminary grip you need to initiate the opening action of the blade. I firmly believe this should be a one-handed process. Any drawstroke or opening method that requires the use of two hands means you must purposely sacrifice the protective function of your non-dominant hand. At close range, with a contact-distance weapon, dropping your guard leaves you extremely vulnerable.

PURCHASE POINT

Opening a non-automatic folding knife one-handed typically requires some kind of purchase on the blade that allows your thumb or finger to gain leverage. Applying pressure to a hole in the blade, a stud, a disk or an index-finger flipper creates leverage to overcome the blade's detent — the lock mechanism's feature to keep the blade closed — and pivots the blade open.

A hole or stud typically offers the best leverage and doesn't require any grip adjustment after your draw. A disk often sits lower on the blade than a stud or a hole, offering less leverage and sometimes making the knife more difficult to open. A flipper requires you to achieve a very specific grip and use a complex motor skill to achieve leverage. When you're under stress, simpler is better.

THUMB OPENING

The most basic and reliable manual one-handed-opening technique is the thumb opening. To perform this technique, grip the handle tightly between the area of your palm at the base of your fingers and the tips of your middle, ring and little fingers. Index your thumb firmly against the blade hole or stud and drive it straight forward toward the pivot-pin end of the knife, trying to make the action of your thumb as much of a gross motor skill as possible. A well-designed folder positions the thumb purchase so that it's well above the pivot pin. This offers greater leverage and allows the drive of your thumb to travel parallel to the centerline of the handle.

If you find yourself running out of thumb before the blade opens fully, reverse engineer your initial grip. Open the blade, place your thumb on the purchase and then establish your grip on the handle, noting where it ends up. Next, close the knife, reestablish that grip and confirm that you can open the blade fully from there. Finally, go back to your drawstroke and make sure you can achieve the proper initial grip immediately from the draw.

FLIPPERS AS DEFENSIVE KNIVES

Another common type of one-hand-opening folder is called a "flipper." Pioneered by the late custom knifemaker Kit Carson, a flipper is an extended tab near the base of the blade edge that acts as a lever to open the blade. When it's stroked with the tip of your index finger, the blade rotates into the open position.

While this opening method itself can be fast, the initial grip required to use it is very specific and leaves less of your hand in contact with the handle. Moreover, the stroking action of your index finger is a complex motor skill that is very perishable under stress.

INERTIAL OPENING

The fastest way to open most folding knives is through inertial opening. This technique involves quickly rotating a closed knife around the blade's pivot pin. When you abruptly stop the motion of the handle, the inertia imparted to the blade overcomes its detent mechanism and carries it to the open position. The advantage of this method is that it does not require you to touch the blade at all. The disadvantage is that it requires practice.

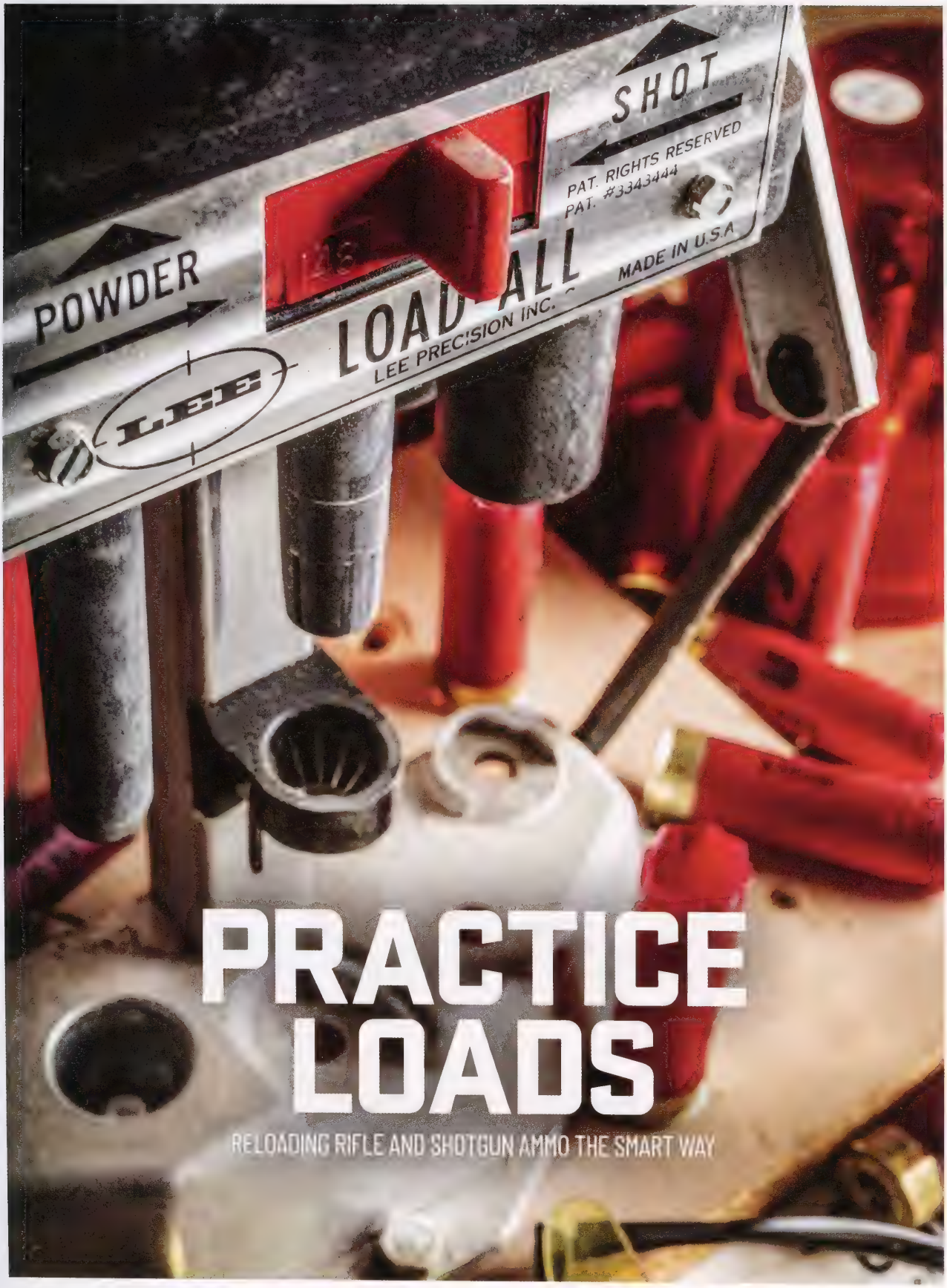
The key to mastering the inertial open is to remember that the blade always rotates on its pivot pin. As such, the closed knife and your hand must also rotate around the pivot pin during the opening action. Bullwhip-like arm snaps that involve your shoulder, elbow and wrist burn more calories but don't impart inertia to the blade effectively and won't open it reliably.

It also helps to know that inertial openings are easier with heavier blades and lock mechanisms that apply light detent pressure, such as liner-lock, compression-lock, ball-bearing-lock and axis-lock mechanisms. Back-lock and frame-lock knives can definitely be opened with this method but require more practice.

You should also know that hard inertial openings, especially with a heavy-bladed folding knife, can accelerate wear on the lock mechanism. Some manufacturers consider these openings abusive and may void your warranty if they learn your knife has been opened this way. Nevertheless, with proper practice, you can learn to inertially open your knife quickly and reliably without using excessive force or shortening the service life of your knife.

MASTER THE METHOD

There's no doubt that getting a folder into action in response to a potentially lethal threat is challenging. Although these techniques have been proven reliable in actual defensive use, they are also not the only way to meet that challenge. No matter which method you choose, train diligently and master it well. That's the only way to guarantee you'll actually be able to use your knife when you need it most.



PRACTICE LOADS

RELOADING RIFLE AND SHOTGUN AMMO THE SMART WAY

Generally speaking, using reloaded rifle and shotgun ammunition for self-defense is not a good idea. The issues primarily come down to legal difficulties and reliability concerns. But if you choose to use reloaded ammunition to reduce costs, you need to be aware of a few important details.

THE ESSENTIALS

First, your ammunition must be reliable. Ignore any outdated advice or method aimed at extracting maximum performance from a round, such as neck-sizing your brass to gain the best accuracy. Instead, you must resize and trim your rifle brass to restore it to its proper length and use a loading press for shotguns that resizes the brass rim. (Most modern cases are brass-plated steel, but they still need resizing.) In addition, you must use a size gauge to check each round to ensure it won't get wedged in the rifle's chamber and require assistance to extract.

Reliable ammunition allows you to focus on proper handling, accuracy and function in your practice sessions. If you want to practice malfunction clearance, use dedicated dummy rounds — not unreliable reloads.

Next, your ammunition must be reasonably accurate compared to factory loads. Suppose the defensive factory rifle load you've chosen shoots a 1.5 Minutes of Angle (MOA) group — a realistic expectation since most rifles don't achieve the "sub-MOA accuracy" promised by advertisers. If your reloaded ammunition shoots 2 MOA, you're in good shape.

Why accept slightly less accuracy? Simple: It forces you to pay closer attention. If your practice produces 2-inch groups, you'll work that much harder to build the skill to stay centered on target. Then, when you switch to higher-quality ammunition, your results will be better. In this case, close enough is truly close enough. However, don't get sloppy; using 4 or 5 MOA ammunition will only lead to frustration.

Your reloads must also have similar ballistic performance to your defensive ammo. Use a bullet (for rifles) or payload weight (for shotguns) that matches your defensive load to ensure a realistic trajectory and felt recoil. Practicing with a rifle reload that impacts a different point of aim or follows a different trajectory than your defensive load is counterproductive.

Aim to get close in velocity, but keep in mind that you don't need an exact match. Slightly reducing velocity can save money and reduce recoil, but avoid going so light that you can feel a noticeable difference. Either way, don't obsess over matching it exactly.

For example, if you're loading .223 and your chosen defensive load is a 55-grain bullet at 3,100 feet per second, any reload that pushes a 55-grain bullet — even a more affordable full metal jacket instead of a bonded-core defensive round — at more than 2,900 feet per second will suffice.

By paying attention to these details, you can significantly reduce your ammo costs without sacrificing quality or performance. One example is using 55-grain full metal jackets instead of bonded bullets. Even using "pulls" removed from surplus ammunition can significantly cut costs. How much? A quick check shows 55-grain full metal jacket available for $65 per thousand bullets, while soft-points range from $130 to $160 per thousand. Bonded-core bullets? They start at $250 per thousand and only go up from there.

NOW FOR SHOTGUNS

A standard nine-pellet 00 buckshot shell throws a combined weight of 1.125 ounces of lead. There are plenty of load combinations for the 12-gauge that feature 1.125 ounces of lead shot. In a rifle, you can load a bit light and save some powder and velocity. A shotgun shell is different. It requires what's known as "100 percent load density," meaning there can be no air space inside the shell once it's loaded and crimped.

With a shotshell, you must follow the exact recipe as printed. That means the shell, primer, powder, wad and payload must match — no substitutions, no improvising and no "I'll load a bit light and see what I get."

Chronographing shotshells is notoriously difficult. Stray pellets and wads will wreck your skyscreens, and radar-based chronographs often struggle to distinguish between the signatures of a wad opening and the pellets dispersing, resulting in no signal. Because of this, you must rely on the velocity cited in the recipe, which is generally accurate enough. You only need to match your defensive load closely enough in velocity to ensure effective practice.

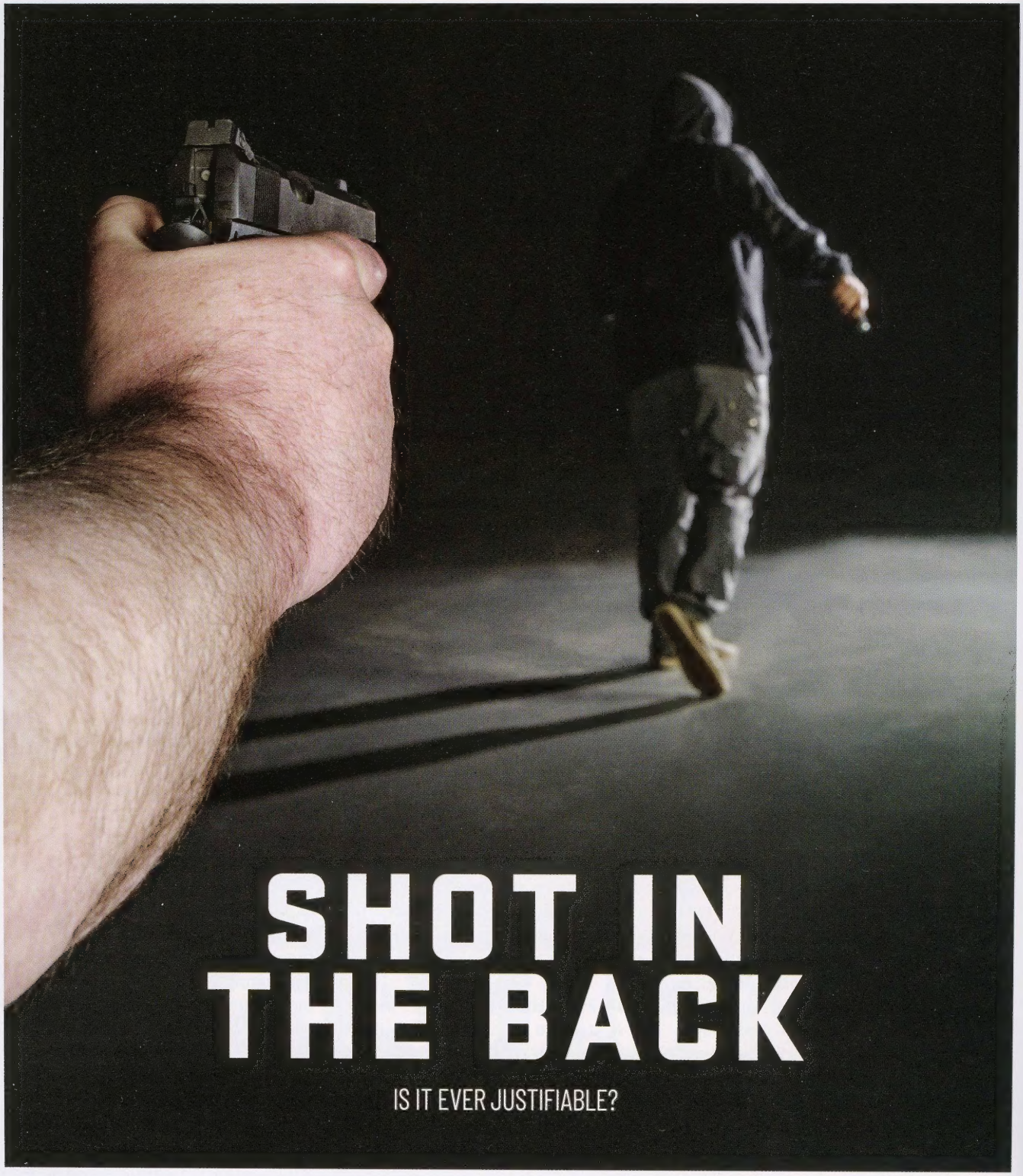
One additional caveat for shotshell practice: Your reloaded shells will need a different choke tube to deliver the same pattern as your defensive load. Have you patterned your defensive load? If not, make sure to do so the next time you're at the range. On the plus side, while most gun clubs prohibit using buckshot on steel targets, birdshot is almost always OK.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

All of this takes time and money, right? Well, anything done right takes time. As for money, it comes down to return on investment.

Let's assume you land on a basic reloading setup that is still relatively quick, such as a Dillon Precision RL550C or a Hornady Lock-N-Load AP — both of which are progressive presses. With all of the necessary extras, either setup will cost you about $1,000. Each 1,000 rounds of .223 you reload saves about $100 compared to buying 55-grain full metal jacket practice ammo and as much as $600 compared to the defensive load you plan to use.

Depending on how you calculate the cost, you recoup your reloading investment in either 10,000 rounds of practice ammo or 1,667 rounds of defensive ammo. After that, every round you reload is money saved — or more practice for the same cost — but only if you pay attention to the details.



SHOT IN THE BACK

IS IT EVER JUSTIFIABLE?

What does it mean — legally, medically and perceptually — when a defensive gunshot strikes an attacker's back? In the July 2025 issue, Kristen Jackson unpacks the critical nuances behind one of the most misunderstood elements of self-defense shootings. From the anatomy of the human body to the milliseconds that define reaction time, her article explores how angles, movement and perception can turn a clear act of defense into a legal quagmire.

WATCH THE VIDEO!

SCAN ME

MADE IN USA

LOCK LEATHER®

HYBRID HOLSTERS

COMFORT OF LEATHER + SAFETY OF POLYMER

URBAN CARRY

SAFE • HIDDEN • READY

888-661-5579

UrbanCarryHolsters.com

OPTICS READY
HOLSTERS AVAILABLE

SHADOW SYSTEMS

WAR POET PISTOLS ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL GUN STORE

WAR POET
CR920
SUB COMPACT
10+1 / 13+1 Capacity

WAR POETS

WAR POET
MR920
COMPACT
15+1 Capacity

WAR POET
CR920P
COMPENSATED SUB COMPACT
10+1 / 13+1 Capacity

WAR POET
DR920
FULL SIZE
17+1 Capacity

SHADOW SYSTEMS

CARRY THE BEST™

ShadowSystemsCorp.com/warpoet

MADE IN USA